

Libya demands U.N. commission to examine charges

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A top Libyan official said Tuesday Libya would surrender its citizens charged with blowing up U.S. and French jets if an international commission examines the evidence and seeks their extradition. Abdul Salim Jalloud, the most powerful man in Libya after Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi suggested that the U.N. secretary-general set up an international commission to study the charges. "If such an objective, legal commission is set up and it asks for it (the extradition), it will be accepted by us," Mr. Jalloud said. Mr. Jalloud arrived here Monday as part of his regional tour seeking support for Libya following a U.N. Security Council resolution demanding that Libya cooperate with demands to surrender the accused. Britain and the United States have charged two Libyan intelligence agents with the December 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people. France has charged four Libyans with the 1989 destruction of a UTA jet over Niger that killed 179 people.

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Israeli court orders army to lift curfew

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's high court of justice on Tuesday ordered the army to lift a two-month-old night curfew on the Palestinian town of Ramallah earlier than planned, a justice ministry spokeswoman said. The army had said it would lift the curfew imposed since Dec. 1 at the end of February. But the court ordered it lifted on Feb. 11. The army imposed a round-the-clock curfew on Ramallah for the first two weeks of December after a fatal ambush on a Jewish settler in the adjacent town of Al Bireh. Since mid-December a strict night curfew has been in force.

No sign of change in U.N. sanctions against Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council on Tuesday began a periodic review of its sanctions against Iraq but gave no sign of any easing of the trade curbs imposed on Baghdad in the wake of its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. "There is very grave concern about a number of Iraqi non-compliance, particularly over weapons of mass destruction, over Kuwaiti detainees, over the return of property, and over some financial issues," Council President Sir David Hanan of Britain told reporters.

2 dead in Egyptian police raid

CAIRO (R) — Clashes between Egyptian villagers and police on a raid for unlicensed firearms killed two people and injured five, security sources said on Tuesday. Police in Assiut 300 kilometres south of Cairo raided the village of Beni Hilal to make a house-to-house search for unlicensed firearms. Security sources said police used tear gas on villagers who threw stones at them, and a firefight followed which killed a peasant and a baby boy. One policeman and four villagers were wounded. Police made 16 arrests and confiscated 21 weapons.

Moroccan trade unionists jailed

RABAT (R) — Three trade unionists were jailed on Monday for between five and 10 months for staging a strike, Morocco's largest labour federation said. The Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT) also said in a statement on Tuesday that 10 other union activists were being sought by police. All 13 are employees of the Nemtavi Company, responsible for street-cleaning in Casablanca. The independent UMT said the convictions were illegal and contrary to trade union freedom enshrined in the constitution.

Helicopter shot down in Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (R) — A civilian helicopter was shot down by a rocket in Azerbaijan on Tuesday, killing around 40 people, TASS news agency said. TASS, quoting a senior Azeri official in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, said the helicopter was shot down while flying from the Azeri town of Agdam to a town in Nagorno-Karabakh. "According to preliminary data, the helicopter was carrying about 40 people, including women and children. All passengers and crew members died," TASS quoted the official as saying.

U.S. tells NATO of deep new nuclear arms cuts

BRUSSELS (R) — The United States told its NATO allies on Tuesday that it was planning to make deep cuts in its long-range nuclear arsenal if former Soviet republics agreed to do the same, alliance sources told Reuters.

Iran wants German help to build 100,000 houses

NICOSIA (R) — Iran has proposed a joint venture with German firms to build 100,000 houses in Iran, the Iranian news agency IRNA said on Tuesday. It said the proposal was made by Ali Kamrava, deputy minister of housing and urban development.

Middle East regional talks start in Moscow

Abu Jaber: Jordan seeks comprehensive peace, regrets exclusion of Palestinians

MOSCOW (Petra) — Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber leading the kingdom's delegation to the Middle East multilateral peace talks that started at the Russian capital yesterday, stressed Jordan's understanding of the conference is being held on the basis of United Nations resolutions, international law and legitimacy and the inadmissibility of acquisition of land by force. In an address before the conference, Dr. Abu Jaber said Jordan has always called for establishing a just and durable peace in the region, based on the U.N. charter and U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Dr. Abu Jaber stressed that there would be no genuine peace in the region until the Palestine question was resolved. He expressed regret that the Palestinian people's representatives could not participate in the conference, and called for involving them in the working groups since

their cause was the core of the Middle East conflict.

On the status of Jerusalem Dr. Abu Jaber declared: "The status of Jerusalem varies in the minds of different peoples. Israel, for instance, speaks of a Jerusalem that encompasses one fifth of the West Bank, while the world at large thinks of it simply as the walled Holy City, a meeting place of the shrines of the three great monotheistic religions." We in Jordan understand its status in the context of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 as an integral part of the occupied territories. The Holy City is the symbol and essence of peace in the region: A city beyond political exigency, that could serve as a spiritual and pragmatic model for conflict resolution.

Dr. Abu Jaber told Jordan Television after the morning session: "The Jordanian delegation attended the conference and there was no empty seat. Our

Palestinian brothers did not show up for the reasons they mentioned."

"The atmosphere at the conference was ceremonial; every delegation delivered an address which expressed its country's viewpoint regarding the peace process from A to Z."

"In my address on behalf of the Jordanian government, I stressed the need to abide by the principles of international legitimacy, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the need for withdrawal and the importance of a settlement based on (U.N. Security Council) resolutions 242 and 338, as well as the importance of the attendance of Palestinians from outside the occupied territories in the talks."

Dr. Abu Jaber said in his opening speech that the conference could not reach any reasonable solutions to the region's problems without the presence of diaspora Palestinians.

"It is regrettable that the Palestinian people are not represented at this conference. I personally feel sad," he said.

"We would have liked to have seen Palestinian representatives from outside the occupied territories as well as east Jerusalem in these talks."

Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber told reporters: "We are still trying to find a way for Palestinians to participate tomorrow. I will see Baker."

Jordan, expected to have formed a joint delegation with the Palestinians, was involved in a dispute with Russian officials over seating arrangements.

Arab sources said the Russians offered four seats. The Jordanians demanded eight, like every other delegation. But the row was quickly solved and reporters at the conference hall saw three delegates sitting at seats allocated to the Jordanians.

Baker: Conference is powerful peace signal

MOSCOW (R) — U.S. Secretary of State James Baker said on Tuesday Middle East peace talks in Moscow would send a powerful signal that Arabs and Israelis were unequivocally committed to peace and reconciliation.

In a speech opening the two-day conference on regional Middle East issues, Mr. Baker proposed a number of modest confidence-building measures in arms control, the environment and economic development.

He said these steps could support the main Arab-Israeli peace negotiations launched at Madrid last October.

On arms control, Mr. Baker said the United States would make available its vast experience from disarmament negotiations in Europe to encourage Arab-Israeli discussions which could lead to reducing the level of conventional arms reaching the region and eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

"The group might move forward to considering a new set of modest confidence building ... measures covering notification of selected military-related activities and crisis prevention communications," Mr. Baker said.

He said the purpose would be to reduce prospects for accidental wars in the Middle East.

Mr. Baker's speech contained a reference to refugees, an issue which has been dropped from the Moscow agenda.

He said a working group on refugees should be established to see whether parties of the region, helped by outside states, could provide resources to improve the lot of refugees.

MOSCOW — "We aim to exercise our right to freedom, self-determination and statehood."

This defiant declaration was to have been the centrepiece of the Palestinian speech to the Moscow conference on regional issues associated with Middle East peace efforts.

But the speech was never delivered. The Palestinians stayed away from Tuesday's opening session when the conference organisers, the United States and Russia, refused to accept delegates from occupied Arab east Jerusalem and from the Palestinian diaspora.

To the Palestinians, it was the latest denial of their nationhood inflicted by a U.S.-sponsored peace process which seeks to address the needs of the 1.75 million inhabitants of the Israeli-occupied territories but which ignores the millions of Palestinians dispersed around the world.

"We remain whole — the nation of Palestine — and here we affirm this wholeness and we are determined to exercise

On economic development, Mr. Baker said the parties should begin focusing on the urgent economic needs of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

He also proposed an environment working group that might begin exchanging scientific findings on shared problems throughout the region. He suggested beginning with the Gulf of Aqaba, a waterway which Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia all hold part of the coastline.

Mr. Baker said the main Arab-Israeli negotiations were moving slowly but at least the parties had been able to sort out some of their procedural wrangles.

"I do not mean to suggest that we are satisfied with all that has transpired," he declared. "As I said in Madrid, we must crawl before we can walk, and we must walk before we can run."

"We are not running and there are those who would say we are not even walking. But we are moving."

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy offered to make Israeli expertise in water use and arid climate agriculture available to the Arab World and declared: "We can create a new Middle East, not in the end of days but today."

Such hopes may be optimistic, at least in the short term, given the lack of progress in separate peace negotiations between Israel and its immediate Arab neighbours — Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians.

Syria and Lebanon boycotted the Moscow conference, arguing that there was no point in holding such talks until Israel committed itself to

withdrawing from the occupied territories.

Arabs defend Palestinians

The Arab states sprang to the defence of Palestinians who stayed away from the opening session.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Musa said in his plenary speech: "We call for reconsideration of this new and strange principle, the principle that one delegation should have the right of veto over the composition of another."

"All Palestinians in the occupied territories and in exile have the right to have their people represented," Mr. Musa added.

He also called for full United Nations participation in talks on regional Middle East issues. The U.N. sought a seat, not observer status in the Moscow talks on arms control, economic development, water resources and the environment.

Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal said: "It particularly grieves us that the Palestinian delegation was not enabled to attend, especially as they are the primary victims."

"The participation of Palestinians, from both inside and outside the occupied territories, must be assured."

Algeria boycotts

Algeria stayed away from the Moscow conference because of the exclusion of Palestinians and Israel's intransigence in previous peace talks, Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi

said on Tuesday. Algeria was to be represented by its ambassador to Moscow but Mr. Ibrahim told journalists the envoy would not attend because of the "absence of the Palestinians and the fact that the peace process has made no progress because of Israeli obstinacy."

Damascus groups welcome Palestinian absence

In Damascus, radical Palestinian groups welcomed the Palestinian team's absence from the opening session of Middle East multilateral talks in Moscow on Tuesday and urged a withdrawal from Moscow.

Khaled Al Fahoum, chief of the four-group Palestinian National Salvation Front described the decision as "correct" and said Palestinians should not attend at all because the PLO was not represented.

"We welcome this decision and consider it a positive step that would help achieve Palestinians unity and pave the way for the establishment of a united PLO," Mr. Fahoum said.

"The delegation should withdraw from Moscow," said Mr. Fahoum, a former speaker of the Palestine National Council.

Syria says Moscow talks won't bring peace

Syria said on Tuesday multilateral Middle East talks in Moscow could not bring peace to the region.

Foreign Minister Farouq Al Shara, addressing a cabinet session discussing the peace process, said the Moscow talks which opened on Tuesday would harm Arabs and benefit Israel.

Palestinians consider U.S., Russian compromise proposal

TUNIS (Agencies) — The PLO leadership met in Tunis on Tuesday to consider a U.S. compromise proposal that would bring Palestinian exiles into future stages of the multilateral Middle East peace conference. PLO sources said.

"Consultations are still going on," the sources said of the meeting of the executive committee, headed by Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat.

The sources said Mr. Arafat had received a message from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak urging him to approve a proposal made by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that exiled Palestinians be allowed to participate within appropriate working groups at later stages of the multilateral talks.

The Palestinian news agency Wafa confirmed that Mr. Mubarak's message was related to the Palestinian delegation's participation in the Moscow talks but gave no opening details.

The Palestinians did not appear at the opening session of the Moscow conference after the U.S. and Russian co-sponsors rejected their pleas for Palestinian exiles and residents of Arab east Jerusalem to be given seats at the meeting.

"We believe the Palestinians are making a mistake by not taking advantage of this opportunity," Mr. Baker told reporters.

"We told the Palestinians we would be supportive of representation by diaspora Palestinians in working groups where that representation was appropriate," he said.

Three of the eight Palestinians who came to Moscow define themselves as exiles — those who were driven out of Palestine when Israel was established in 1948 and who press for their right to return to their homeland.

Mrs. Ashrawi said peace conference rules were never intended to exclude exiles and that Israel was behind it. "Israel is doing everything possible in order to undermine the peace process," she said.

Mr. Baker, with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev at his side, said the Palestinians had declined the compromise offer, though he hoped they would reconsider before the working groups assemble on Wednesday.

The sessions "represent a significant opportunity for them," he said.

Speaking also for Mr. Kozyrev, Mr. Baker said the aim "was to get agreement" on working groups. But he said there would be no change in the rules when direct Arab-Israeli peace talks are resumed.

Those talks are tentatively set for next month, but the site is still under discussion.



Elias Freij

Jews fire at Freij's home

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Gunmen on Tuesday fired at the home of Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij, a Palestinian delegate to Middle East peace talks. An underground Jewish group claimed responsibility.

Israeli military sources said the shots, fired after midnight, missed Mr. Freij's house but chipped the outside of neighbouring houses. No one was injured.

An Israel Radio correspondent reported that a caller speaking Hebrew said an obscure group called the Hasmonians fired at Mr. Freij's house. Mr. Freij was not taking part in the multilateral Middle East peace talks taking place in Moscow.

"He (the caller) said the shooting was a warning for all PLO members in the occupied territories to run away before something else happens to them," said Moti Amir, Israel Radio correspondent in the West Bank.

Mr. Freij, one of 14 supporters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip who are conducting peace talks with Israel, demanded an investigation.

"It is a criminal and an extremist act. I consider this a terrorist attack and an attempt to undermine the peace process," Mr. Freij told reporters.

Israeli journalists say they believe that extremist Jewish settlers opposed to Israeli-Arab peace talks are behind the Hasmonians.

The group, named after biblical Jewish nationalists, has not been active since it became known for anti-Palestinian graffiti scrawled at the start of the Palestinian uprising four years ago.

Hawatmech, Parliament bloc urge Arab reconciliation

AMMAN (Petra) — Members of the Constitution Bloc at the Lower House of Parliament and some members of the House's Islamic Bloc Tuesday discussed with a delegation representing the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), headed by Secretary General Nayef Hawatmech, the latest developments of the Palestine question and the peace process. Both sides stressed the need for forging closer coordination among Arab parties, and for crystallising a strong Arab position. Spokesman of the Constitution Bloc Fawzi Tuameh said Mr. Hawatmech presented an initiative for Arab reconciliation. The initiative calls on Arab parliaments to work out an inter-Arab reconciliation document and to work for achieving Arab solidarity. The initiative also calls for holding an Arab summit to hammer out a common Arab plan of action, Dr. Tuameh said. In its meetings with the members of the Islamic Bloc, the DFLP delegation discussed scopes of cooperation and means of safeguarding the Palestinian uprising and supporting the kinsmen in the occupied Arab territories.

FIS editor arrested

FLN leadership calls for national conference

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Algeria's former ruling National Liberation Front, in disarray after losing control of the nation called a national conference for next month.

Algiers radio earlier had reported the resignation of the party's entire political bureau, led by FLN Secretary General Abdul Hamid Mehri.

But later, the radio said that about 150 senior party officials had rejected the resignation and asked Mr. Mehri to stay on.

The emergency meeting of the party's central committee that began Saturday ended Tuesday with a call for a national conference in three weeks, according to conference sources speaking on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Mehri was a supporter of former President Chadli Benjedid's democratic reforms, which were scrapped after Islamic fundamentalists gained an unbeatable lead in the country's first multi-party parliamentary election.

Many in the party want to endorse this month's army-backed upheaval in which Mr. Benjedid resigned, the half-finished election was cancelled and fundamentalist preachers were ordered to keep politics out of the mosques.

The new FLN meeting will include central committee members and representatives of the rank and file.

Mr. Mehri suggested on Tuesday that the emergency meeting be suspended and the conference held.

"If the central committee wants me to announce my resignation to facilitate things, I am ready to," he told the committee late on Monday night.

Mr. Mehri has faced a barrage of criticism from party ranks after he described the new presidential council, headed by formerly exiled FLN dissident Mohammad Boudiaf, as unconstitutional and held talks with Islamic fundamentalists.

He initially suggested the 15-man political bureau he heads should resign en masse, but at a late night session on Monday, offered only his own resignation.

The British Broadcasting Corporation, quoting Algiers radio, said early on Tuesday that the

FLN political bureau had resigned. Committee members said no decision on a leadership change had been taken.

The draft resolution which was being discussed by the central committee would have supported the five-man presidential council that replaced Mr. Benjedid two weeks ago, but also called for a return to the "fundamental objectives" of his reforms.

'Kebir detained'

ALGIERS (R) — Police on Tuesday arrested one of the few senior leaders of the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) still at liberty in Algeria, a source close to the FIS said. Rabah Kebir was led from FIS headquarters in central Algiers by two armed policemen as a dozen others guarded the building, the source said.

It said the central committee "salutes the return of brother militant Mohammad Boudiaf and welcomes his return as a contribution to overcome the dangers and difficulties which run through the country."

Calling for a return to the "fundamental objectives" of democracy and the constitution, it backed "the dialogue inaugurated by the president of the high council of state" towards solving the country's problems.

A source close to the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front said on Tuesday that police had arrested Salah Gouami, director-general of the FIS's Arab-language weekly newspaper Al Mounquid. There was no official confirmation.

At the weekend, police stopped the print run of Al Mounquid and raided the offices of the FIS French-language weekly El Forqane "to arrest the journalists," a source close to the FIS said earlier.

The FIS has denied that the newspaper carried a statement by provisional leader Abdul Kader Hachani, arrested last Wednesday, after publication of a call allegedly seeking revolt in the army.

Islamists expect strong showing in Kuwait poll

By Mariam Isa

KUWAIT (R) — Islamic groups, capitalising on their active role during Iraqi occupation, anticipate a strong showing in October elections for Kuwait's restored parliament.

Leaders of three Islamic movements — which have joined forces with other opposition groups — say popular support has grown since U.S.-led troops drove Iraq out last February.

Mosques were centres of resistance during the seven-month occupation and filled with large numbers of devotees at prayer times. Islamic leaders helped distribute food and medicine to Kuwaitis in most residential areas.

This helped counter the influence of Western culture among residents impressed with the role the west played in liberating their country, the Islamic activists say.

"During the occupation almost all our leaders stayed in Kuwait and played a major role in helping the people," Ahmed Baqer, leader of the Islamic Alliance said.

"I think that all the people in Kuwait really appreciate this — I can see it in so many ways," he said.

Baqer said his group, calling themselves the "Self" (heirs), would field eight to 10 candidates in the polls for 50 representatives from Kuwait's 25 constituencies.

The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), another Islamic group, says it will have at least 15 candidates.

The National Islamic Coal-

ition, representing the country's large Shi'ite minority, simply says there will be "many."

Diplomats say the Islamic groups are better organised than their rivals, but support for Iraq's occupation by non-Kuwaiti Islamic groups could taken some gloss off their appeal to the electorate.

Kuwaiti rulers agreed during the occupation to restore the parliament, dissolved because of security concerns in 1986.

A partially-elected National Council, which the opposition says is unconstitutional, was reinstated for an 18-month interim period after Iraqi forces were driven out.

Like the rest of the opposition, Kuwait's Islamic groups say reinstatement of the toothless council showed lack of trust.

They are calling for fair elections to ensure increased popular participation in the government, now dominated by the ruling Al-Sabah family. Islamic activists support calls for freedom of the press and expression.

They complain the government has not done enough to promote Islamic values through education and the mass media.

The groups have varying views on women's suffrage — never granted in Kuwait — and are against payment of interest.

"I feel we don't have a real identity for Kuwait society — for years we have been under the influence of so many cultures from all over the world," said ICM spokesman Isa Shaheen.

"This is the right time to implement a strategy for a real Islamic identity... stronger steps must be taken to present Islam in a simpler way."

Shaheen says Iraq's August 2, 1990 invasion strengthened Islamic values among the emirate's youths.

Signs of Western influence — girls wearing hot pants — were only superficial and would quickly disappear, he said.

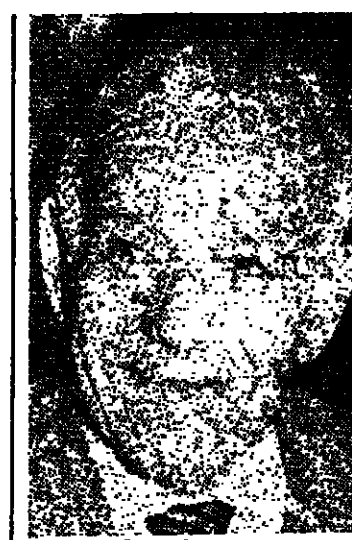
Shiite leader Adnan Abdul-Samad said he had noted reactions against "decadent" trends that crept into Kuwait since the war.

"A lot of people have come to fear the influence of Western ways on their traditions. They didn't want to be liberated militarily in order to be enslaved socially."

Shaheen said the ICM had changed its name and broken links with similar groups outside the emirate because of their sympathy for Iraq during the crisis.

Abdul-Samad said the occupation had helped erode suspicion between members of the two sects of Islam, which he maintained was cultivated by the government.

"Shiite and Sunnis were side by side in armed resistance during the occupation and people realised this division was false — it is reflected in people's attitudes now."



Yitzhak Shamir

Shamir begins consultations on early elections

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's minority government began consultations on early elections after surviving a no-confidence vote in parliament Tuesday.

The five motions were defeated 55-49 Monday in the first no-confidence vote since Shamir lost his parliamentary majority last week.

Two small far-right parties quit the government over Middle East peace talks, leaving Shamir with a 59-61 minority.

"Apparently it is already certain there will be early elections," said Sarah Doron, head of Shamir's ruling Likud party faction in parliament. "We are speaking about elections in the summer."

Doron said she was consulting coalition and opposition parties on a date for elections. Knesset members said the poll was likely to be held in June or July instead of November.

The challenge to Shamir came on the eve of a fresh round of Middle East peace talks in Moscow.

Some government ministers say an early election could benefit the right-wing Likud party.

A public opinion poll last week gave Likud and small far-right parties a slight edge over the opposition Labour party and its left-wing allies. Orthodox and ultra-orthodox religious parties which now support Shamir hold the balance of power in parliament.

The no-confidence motions brought by the opposition alleged that Israel was suffering deteriorating social and economic conditions amid rising unemployment and lavish spending on building Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

"We have a deep argument with the finance minister who prefers 16 per cent unemployment as long as the settlements are not warned," said Labour's Ora Namir.

U.N. sends envoy to seek peace for Afghans

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The United Nations is trying once again to end a war which has cost over a million lives, believing there is more support than ever before for talks between Afghanistan's feuding factions.

"The time is ripe, in my view, to take concrete steps to promote a comprehensive political settlement," Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali said.

The U.N. chief has sent his envoy Benon Sevan, now believed to be in Saudi Arabia, on another mission to Kabul and perhaps Islamabad to see if there is hope of organising a broad-based government.

Boutros-Ghali received a boost Monday from Pakistan, whose foreign ministry signalled a turning point in its Afghanistan policy.

In announcing support for U.N. plans, it implicitly rejected attempts by faction-ridden guerrilla movements to overthrow the government of Afghan President Najibullah by force.

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan provide funds for the guerrillas. If Riyadh agrees with Islamabad's new approach, diplomats say radical Pakistan-based rebels who reject any U.N. programme may be isolated.

Over the past decade more than a million people have died and two million have been displaced. Five million are in exile and another two million have moved from their homes.

"I should like to assure the Afghan people of my commitment to promote vigorously a political settlement to end protracted conflict," Boutros-Ghali said.

Last May the United Nations presented a plan for a transition period leading to the establishment of a new government through elections. To this end it hoped to organise an assembly of leaders of all political, regional, tribal, opposition and resistance groups.

U.N. sources say Sevan is trying to convene a meeting of 150 representatives of Afghan actions in February or March somewhere outside the region.

This assembly would appoint a working group on a transition stage leading to free elections. Its results would have to be approved by another and larger group of delegates.

Radical Muslim guerrilla groups have sabotaged all efforts to start an intra-Afghan dialogue. Some thought talks would begin after the United States and the Soviet Union stopped shipping weapons to the opposing parties January 1.

Boutros-Ghali, saying there had been "positive developments in recent months," called on other states to take decisions similar to those of Washington and Moscow, which invaded Afghanistan 12 years ago.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey as well as China have felt free to interfere in Afghan politics.

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Middle East News in Brief

Snow kills 12 in Algeria

ALGIERS (R) — Heavy rain and snow have killed at least 12 people in Algeria and left hundreds homeless. Algerian Radio and local newspapers said three people were killed in Blida province, 50 kilometres from the capital, including a bulldozer driver swept away doing rescue work. The Algerian News Agency APS said a nine-year-old child and a man drowned in Blida and two people were also missing. Nearly 40 families were homeless there. The agency said dozens had been injured by falling rubble, and workmen were putting supports to threatened walls. Civil protection services warned of danger from high tension electricity wires brought down by the storms.

Kuwait, Britain to sign pact

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's Defence Minister Sheikh Ali Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah will travel to London February 5 to sign a defence pact with Britain, a Kuwaiti daily said Tuesday. Defence ministry officials declined to confirm the date reported by the emirate's Sawt Al Kuwait daily. Britain's Defence Secretary Tom King said last week that Sheikh Ali's visit would take place during the first week of February. The joint defence pact will cover planning, training, joint exercises and supply of equipment. Kuwait signed a similar 10-year agreement with the United States last year.

Fahd promises 1st assembly law

NICOSIA (R) — King Fahd said Monday that a long-awaited law establishing Saudi Arabia's first representative assembly would be announced next month. The assembly, known as the Consultative Council, would be the kingdom's first tentative experiment with democracy. The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said the king told a cabinet meeting "the country's system of rule, the law of the Consultative Council and the system of the regions will be announced next month." Saudi Arabia, which has no written constitution, is an absolute monarchy with no legislature or political parties. The Council of Ministers serves as the instrument of royal authority in both legislative and executive matters.

49 car thefts in 48 hours

BEIRUT (AP) — Police said Monday 49 cars were stolen in Beirut during the weekend, an all-time record for the Lebanese capital that was ravaged by the 1975-90 civil war. A police spokesman, who cannot be named under standing regulations, said the thefts were recorded in various Christian and Muslim neighbourhoods of Beirut Saturday and Sunday. Police patrols are roaming the capital and its environs to try to locate the stolen cars and the thieves, but no arrests have yet been made, said the spokesman. Police records show that more than 79,000 cars worth about \$2 million were stolen in Lebanon since the civil war erupted in 1975. Topping the list are German-made Mercedes-Benz and BMWs, which were favoured by Christian and Muslim militias during the sectarian conflict that was halted by an Arab League-brokered peace plan in 1990. No. 2 on the list are Japanese-made cars like Toyotas.

Bush seeks advice on how to punish and isolate Libya

WASHINGTON (AP) — President George Bush has quietly exempted 13 top officials from federal conflict-of-interest laws so they may advise him on how Libya can be "punished and isolated" for the 1988 bombing of a U.S. jetliner over Scotland.

Three of the officials, Secretary of State James Baker, then-Commerce Secretary Robert Moshbacher and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, have large oil investments. One tactic proposed by foreign policy experts has been an oil embargo against the North African country.

The unusual group waiver was granted by Mr. Bush less than a week after two Libyan intelligence officers were indicted by the Justice Department and Britain last November in the bomb-

ing of Pan American Airways Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

A president is known to have granted a similar group exemption only once before: In August of 1990, Mr. Bush similarly waived the law for 11 of the same officials so he could get their advice on "policies and military measures" to counter the week-old Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Although both waivers are public documents, neither was publicly disclosed until requested by the press.

It is a felony for federal officials to take or recommend government actions that directly affect their personal finances, but a superior can waive the law if the financial interest is too small to influence them.

In both waivers, Mr. Bush

wrote that although some officials would not need the waiver, others have "substantial financial interests in industries that may be affected."

In the Libyan waivers, Mr. Bush concluded, "in my judgment, the nature of the current situation and the gravity of the measures under consideration by the United States are such that even the substantial financial interests held by some of you could not be deemed likely to affect the integrity" of their actions. His Iraq waiver was almost identical.

"We now face a series of decisions on steps the international community should take to ensure that a major perpetrator of state-sponsored terrorism — Libya — is both punished and isolated," Mr. Bush wrote.

Some government ministers say an early election could benefit the right-wing Likud party.

A public opinion poll last week gave Likud and small far-right parties a slight edge over the opposition Labour party and its left-wing allies. Orthodox and ultra-orthodox religious parties which now support Shamir hold the balance of power in parliament.

The no-confidence motions brought by the opposition alleged that Israel was suffering deteriorating social and economic conditions amid rising unemployment and lavish spending on building Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

"We have a deep argument with the finance minister who prefers 16 per cent unemployment as long as the settlements are not warned," said Labour's Ora Namir.

In Moscow, they speak English, Hebrew, Japanese

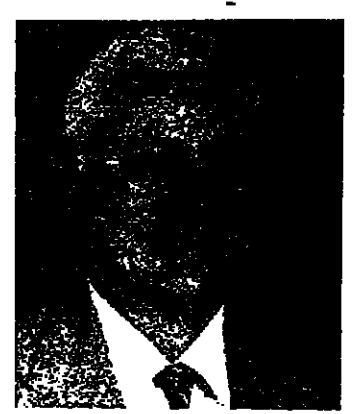
MOSCOW (AP) — "Jimmy, OK?"

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy doesn't speak English, but he mustered enough words to help U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III, who was having trouble picking up the translation of Levy's speech from Hebrew.

"Zero, zero," Levy said to Baker, referring to the channel number for hearing the English on headphones. The incident drew a ripple of laughter and added a light moment to the solemnity of Tuesday's opening session of the Moscow Middle East peace talks.

Like the Madrid conference that preceded it, the Moscow gathering of more than 20 nations had a cosmopolitan flavour fully in keeping with the "new world order."

The Arabs were there, many of them in robes and keffiyeh head-dresses, opposite long-time Israeli foes. Canadian Barbara McDougall was the only woman foreign minister. Baker looked his usual well-tailored self in dark



Kamel Abu Jaber

suit and red tie. The Omani delegates wore sashes and turbans.

Also present were Japanese and Chinese. They were among the many non-Middle Eastern diplomats who came here to make a contribution to the peace process and claim a corner of the world political stage.

How much that stage has changed was evident, starting



Michio Watanabe

with the fact that the talks were being held in Moscow. Until recently, no Israeli government would have agreed to attend such a gathering here.

But now the Soviet Union is dead, Russia has made friends with Israel, and as Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev remarked in his speech: "We are not going to compete for ideology, influence or for military



David Levy

domination, and imperial ambitions are also alien to us."

The meeting was held in the chandeliered hall of columns in the house of unions, a graceful three-story building in downtown Moscow better known for housing the Stalinist show trials in the 1930s. It's also where dead Soviet leaders used to lie in state.

The fact that Israelis and Arabs were sitting together reflected the

transformation wrought by the Gulf war. Having met a common enemy in the shape of Saddam Hussein, Israelis, Saudis, Moroccans, Qataris and others find it a lot easier to meet in the same room.

The meeting was set for 9 a.m. with a half hour set aside for delegates to gather. They drifted in in small groups, some taking their seats, others standing up and chatting. As in Madrid, there were no handshakes between enemies.

At 9:27 a.m., melodious chimes summoned the delegates to their seats, and three minutes later Kozyrev called the meeting to order. Baker spoke first.

Levy, a Moroccan immigrant with an elegant coiffe of gray hair, delivered his speech in Hebrew and Jordanian Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber, spoke in English, and Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe spoke in Japanese.

Each speech drew a polite round of applause.

Bonn envoy to discuss hostages with Tehran

BONN (R) — German Justice Minister Klaus Kinkel flew to Iran Tuesday and government sources said he would press Tehran to use its influence to win the release of two German hostages in Lebanon.

The sources said Kinkel would discuss the last two remaining western hostages in Lebanon — Thomas Kempster and Heinrich Strubig — with Iranian leaders during the three-day visit.

The visit is part of a series of high-level contacts between Tehran and Bonn aimed at improving political and economic ties.

Strubig, 50 and Kempster, 30, who worked for a private

Minister tours JEA stations

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Ali Abul Ragheb who is also chairman of the board of the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA), Tuesday visited JEA work stations in south Amman and Zarqa where he was briefed on the progress of work in these stations.

He began his tour by a visit to the National Monitoring and Control Centre where he was briefed by its director on the duties performed by the centre's personnel. The centre maintains control of the operations of the electric equipment and monitors the operational processes around the clock.

The minister also visited the office of Jordan's Belly Controls Company, where he was briefed on the nature of work at the company and its objectives. The company aims at developing the skills and experiences of electric engineers in the areas of electric control at the electricity generating stations.

The minister then inspected the gas turbines site south of Amman and the Hussein Thermal Station in Zarqa where he inspected the technical station. The minister's tour also took him to the main workshops at the station where he watched the process of manufacturing and maintaining spare parts needed for the electric equipment used in the station.

Also in Zarqa, the minister visited the electric training centre, where he was briefed by the centre's director on the training programmes offered by the centre.

The minister was accompanied on his tour by JEA Director General Mohammad Said Arafah.



Minister of Transport Ali Subeimat (right) Tuesday receives Turkish delegation members in Amman.

Jordan to hold talks on increasing cooperation on overland transport matters (Petra photo)

Jordan, Turkey discuss increased cooperation in overland transport

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Turkey Tuesday opened three days of talks designed to promote cooperation in matters related to overland transport in the course of implementing a 1988 international road transport agreement signed by the two countries.

The talks cover the transportation of goods by trucks and other vehicles, the travel of Jordanian and Turkish nationals to either country by land and facilities for other means of transport between Turkey and Jordan.

The talks are conducted through a joint commission co-chaired by Turkish Deputy Direc-

tor of the Land Transport at the Ministry of Transport Yasar Coban and Awad Al Tal, Jordanian Ministry of Transport Secretary General.

According to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the two sides will also re-examine duty on transit operations, prospects for unifying tariffs and allowing Jordanian lorries and refrigerated trucks to enter Turkish territory and take on loads destined for Jordan or a third country.

The commission is also expected to examine the prospects of amending the 1988 agreement to promote trade and land trans-

port and encourage the private sectors in the two countries to coordinate their operations and launch joint transportation operations, Petra said.

The Turkish side, which comprises seven members, will pay a visit to the Dead Sea Wednesday and will pursue talks with Jordanian officials on Thursday before leaving for home.

Delegation members had a meeting Tuesday with Minister of Transport Ali Subeimat, who expressed hope that the commission would reach fruitful agreement to promote transport and trade between Jordan and Turkey.

Engineers call off scheduled strike

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Thanks to last minute efforts by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and his pledge that all engineers will be given fair treatment in appointment and salary matters, a nationwide strike that would have started today has been averted.

Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) Secretary General Hatem Bishtawi told the Jordan Times that there will be no strike by the estimated 1,500 engineers now that the prime minister has promised them a fair solution to their problems.

He said that the JEA was serving notice to the engineers through advertisements in the press that the scheduled strike has been called off in light of the pledges from the prime minister.

An estimated 1,500 engineers held a four hour sit-in outside the Ministry of Public Works and Housing Sunday to protest continuing salary inequities and demanded that all engineers be given fair treatment. They also threatened to

stage a strike Wednesday should their demands remain unheeded.

JEA President Ismail Breiwish and board members called at the Prime Ministry Tuesday and discussed the demands with Sharif Zeid in the presence of his deputies, Minister of Education Thouqan Al Hindawi and Minister of Transport Ali Subeimat as well as Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Ibrahim Izzeddin and Minister of Public Works and Housing Saad Hayel Surour.

Sharif Zeid listened to the grievances of the engineers and took note of complaints about alleged different treatment by the government of engineers in terms of salaries following the amendments to the Civil Service Commission regulations in 1988.

Mr. Breiwish demanded that all engineers, whether appointed to work for government ministries before or after the amendment of the regulations had taken effect and regardless of the years an engineer had spent to get his degree, be treated equally. He noted that the present difficult economic conditions in the

Kingdom were making life difficult for engineers as well as everyone else.

The prime minister said that the JEA board that the Ministry of Public Works and Housing had already sent a memorandum to the government calling for an amendment to the Civil Service Commission regulations in a manner that would achieve equality in appointment for all engineers.

The government is giving due concern to the matter and is concerned with adopting a unified allowance system Sharif Zeid said. It has referred the whole matter to the Legislation Bureau at the Prime Ministry to draw up a draft for such a system before further action towards its application can be taken, the prime minister noted.

With reference to a demand by the JEA that the government should offer equal treatment in salaries retroactively, the prime minister said that although the constitution does not allow such a procedure, separate cases concerning a few engineers could be examined in a manner that would respect laws and regulations.

Sharif Zeid also said that the government was determined to treat all employees fairly and it realises the difficult circumstances facing the country and the engineers.

He urged the engineers and all concerned parties to cooperate and share the responsibility to help the country overcome the present difficult situation it is in.

The engineers said that government employed engineer used to get a JD 30 a month allowance every three years as an inflation allowance plus a fixed percentage for his respective technical expertise. They said that these allowances were halted in a decision taken in 1987.

The JEA is now hoping that all such matters and grievances be settled fairly and it finds new hope in the prime minister's promises, said Mr. Bishtawi.

In a reply to the prime minister, Mr. Breiwish voiced the JEA appreciation of the government's efforts to settle the dispute. He also promised that the engineers will do all they can to serve their country and nation.

Commission calls for protection of Jerusalem

AMMAN (Petra) — Information Minister Mahmoud Al Sharif Sunday returned home from Morocco after taking part in the meetings of the Jerusalem Commission and the Arab foreign ministers, which were held in Marrakech under the chairmanship of King Hassan II of Morocco.

In an arrival statement, Mr. Sharif said the meetings were positive and useful. He added that the meetings provided an opportunity for participating ministers to exchange views with King Hassan on the best methods for making the Arab voice heard, how to activate the role of the United Nations Security Council in shaping the emerging new world order and laying down foundations for a just peace.

Mr. Sharif added that Arab foreign ministers discussed with King Hassan his forthcoming visit to the United States, which will take place at the end of this month, to attend the Security Council meetings that will be held at the summit level.

The parties also discussed the multilateral peace talks which started in Moscow Tuesday.

Mr. Sharif also said that he took part in the meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference's Jerusalem Commission, which King Hassan heads. The committee emphasised the Arab identity of Jerusalem and rejected any call for eliminating it from the peace talks. The committee also condemned the Judaisation of the city, the escalation of settlements and the oppressive measures practised against its people.



ANNIVERSARY BASH — The Amman Marriott Hotel Sunday celebrated its 10th anniversary with a grand reception to which the hotel's general manager, Francis Keenan, invited prominent Jordanian and foreign businessmen.

members of diplomatic missions in Jordan, representatives of travel and tourist offices, journalists and other dignitaries. Above, Mr. and Mrs. Keenan welcome guests to the grand reception.

Frost damaging water pipes and meters, car engines also affected, officials report

AMMAN (J.T.) — The present spell of cold wave and the frost affecting the country is disrupting water supplies within the Amman Governorate, damaging pipes and uncovered water meters, the Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) said in a statement Tuesday.

No less than 400 lines reaching subscribers within the Amman region and 5,000 water meters are being damaged because of the cold on a daily basis, said the WAJ statement.

The unexpected cold wave which is affecting all regions of Jordan has caused particular damage to the meters and the pipes at night or in the early morning hours when the water tends to freeze with below zero temperatures.

The Meteorology Department recorded minus 3 degrees Celsius at night in Amman, but reports said other regions witnessed even lower temperatures, reaching minus 10 degrees Celsius in the south.

The WAJ said that it would have to take further precautions with regard to meters to prevent any recurrence of damage.

According to the WAJ statement, the earlier cold wave which followed the snowstorm caused damage to some 50,000 water meters in Jordan and broke numerous pipes, disrupting water supplies.

The statement urged citizens to

cover the meters and keep them in closed boxes or wrap them in cloth for protection from the cold.

The cold spell, which is expected by the Meteorology Department to end Wednesday, was also reported to have caused damages to crops in the Jordan Valley.

Meanwhile, two specialists at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), said that many cars did not work in Amman and other cities in the early hours of the

past few days because the water in the radiator had frozen.

Dr. Najeh Akeel and engineer Rida Qadumi said that the below zero temperatures were causing a freezing of the water in the radiators, making it impossible to turn on the engine. They warned that repeated attempts to start the car would cause severe damage to the engine.

They also said that the antifreeze liquids, whether imported or locally produced, are ineffective and do not help start the engines.

Ministry of Tourism calls on private sector to help promote Kingdom; will introduce information system

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Tourism Tuesday issued a call to the private sector to help in promoting domestic tourism in Jordan and said that plans have been worked out for creating additional numbers of resthouses along main roads in a bid to promote the tourism industry in the Kingdom.

The appeal was issued by the Ministry's Director of Internal Tourism Activities Nashed Kawalit, who urged the private sector to set up tourist camps, youth hostels and other attractions for youths to help them travel around the country and discover its archaeological treasures.

The facilities existing in the country are mainly intended for foreign visitors, who enjoy their stay in hotels and resthouses. The ministry, however, hopes to stimulate the domestic tourism industry with the help of the private sector, said Mr. Kawalit.

The ministry has already worked out plans for resthouses in cooperation with the ministries of public works and communications as well as the civil defence and public security departments. These resthouses offer meals and brief overnight stays and other services, Mr. Kawalit added.

This year the ministry is looking forward towards increasing its activities through launching public awareness campaigns about tourism in the country and is enlisting the help of the Jordan Express and Tourist Company (JETT), which would operate regular bus trips to the various tourist sites, Mr. Kawalit noted.

Furthermore, the ministry has just published tourist travelogues and leaflets featuring the most prominent tourist and archaeological sites for the benefit of the public giving details about mineral water resources, folklore activities, flora and fauna and organising a number of folkloric exhibitions.

He said that the ministry has opened tourist offices in areas from the north to the south and plans to open more offices in other areas this year.

Tourist information system

Visitors of Jordan as well as residents will benefit from the introduction of a new computerised tourist information system, according to a Tourism Ministry statement. Through French cultural aid, the Ministry of Tourism received this system, including equipment and training, by which visitors at the airport, hotels or tourist sites will obtain information about Jordan on a little screen-Minitel connected through the telephone communication system to a central computer based at the Ministry of Tourism.

By dialing Telephone No. 613101, screen owners will have access to the information data-

base, the statement said.

The ministry feeds the computer with basic information on education, economy, government and other things and detailed information on touristic sites, services and facilities. The information will be constantly being updated and revised by the Marketing Dept. at the ministry, the statement said.

This system-Telematique is widely used in France. Other similar systems are used in European countries such as Prestel in the United Kingdom, the statement added.

In the next few months, screens will be made available at hotels in Amman, Aqaba, and Petra as well as the tourist centres and airports.

This project will be inaugurated under the patronage of Their Excellencies the Jordanian and the French ministers of tourism on Feb. 1, at the Regency Palace Hotel.

Olympic training courses to be held in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Secretary General of the Jordanian Olympic Committee Abdullah Abu Nuwwar Tuesday returned home after representing Jordan in meetings held in Bangkok between the Olympic committees secretaries general and director of the International Olympic Solidarity Committee. In an arrival statement, Mr. Abu Nuwwar said that participants decided to hold three training courses in Jordan covering basketball, table tennis and preparation of sport leaders. He added that the committee also agreed to hold 12 local and regional training courses, during the period from 1993 to 1996. Every year, two local training courses will be held in Jordan while a third, a regional one, will be held elsewhere with Jordan participating. The committee also allocated \$150,000 to hold courses aimed at preparing prominent players, aged between 15 and 20 years, to take part in the Olympic Games, which will be held in Atlanta in 1996. Mr. Abu Nuwwar added that Jordan will also take part in annual courses for the training of trainers. The duration of each course is six months. Moreover, Jordan will get a scholarship to participate in a skating course to be held in Japan. The Japanese Olympic Committee will cover costs of the Jordanian scholar. The Olympic Solidarity Committee groups 170 national Olympic committees, including 38 Asian national committees. The committee allocates \$15 million a year, of which \$6.5 million are allocated to Asian Olympic committees.

WHAT'S GOING ON

- ★ Art exhibition by Her Royal Highness Princess Wijdan and Italian ambassador to Jordan Franco de Courten at Abdal Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery — 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- ★ Exhibition of the activities of the Goethe Institute in Amman at the institute, Jabal Amman.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Alia Shanti Amoura at Alia Art Gallery.

THEATRE

- ★ Arabic play entitled "Golgatesh" at the Royal Cultural Centre — 8 p.m.

SEMINAR

- ★ Seminar, in Arabic, on the political parties law at the Royal Cultural Centre — 6 p.m.

LECTURE

- ★ Lecture in French, entitled "Paul Gauguin (ou la Couleur en Liberté)" by Noel Favreliere at the French Cultural Centre — 6 p.m.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT Jordanian-Syrian Land Transport Co. Invites

Contractors to participate in tender No. 4/92 for supply of spare parts for its Mercedes trucks type (L&S 2624) as per part numbers and quantities attached with terms of tender.

Contractors wishing to bid for tender can obtain copies of tender documents from the company in Jabal Al Hussein — behind Ministry of Health — Opposite Al Fadel Ibn Abbas Mosque — Amman for a non-refundable fee of JD 160,000 (one hundred and sixty Jordan dinars) per a copy, bearing official documents proving their registration in records of trading agents.

Offers should be submitted not later than 2:30 p.m. (local Jordan time) on Sunday March 1st. 1992.

Chairman/General Manager
Hisham Asfour

Iraqi-Jordanian Land Transport Co. Tender No. 2/92 Supply Of 100 Heavy Duty Truck Tractors

The Iraqi-Jordanian Land Transport Co. invites interested suppliers to bid for the supply of 100 heavy duty truck tractors. A copy of terms, conditions and technical specifications can be bought from company's main offices in Jabal Amman opposite to the Tunisian Embassy during official working hours (8:00-14:00) excluding Fridays and official holidays starting from Thursday 30/1/1992.

Closing date for accepting offers is Thursday (1200 HRS), 27/2/1992.

Dr. Shaker Mahadin
Director General

وزارة الأشغال العامة والإسكان
دائرة العطاءات الحكومية

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS & HOUSING
GOVERNMENT TENDERS DIRECTORATE

**Ministry of Public Works & Housing
Government Tenders Directorate
General Tenders announcement. Invitation to
Tenders No. (33, 34/92)**

Local contractors classified in the field of buildings Classification Grade First or Second and international contractors in the same field and classification who are interested in participating in this tender are requested to contact the government Tenders Directorate at the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Amman, Jordan, to receive tender documents starting from 27/1/1992 and in accordance with the following terms:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date For Submission Of Tenders
(33/92)	1. Construction of Al-Nozha/Al-Zarqa Comp. Boys School area (3363)m ² 2. Construction of Al-Ghweriah/Al Zarqa Comp. Boys School area (3343)m ² 3. Construction of Al-Olema/Al-Mafraq Comp. Girls School area (3558)m ²	27/2/1992 Thursday
(34/92)	1. Construction of Al-Tafila Comp. Girls School area (2830)m ² 2. Construction of Joza Comp. Girls School/Irbid area (2497)m ² 3. Construction of Aye Comp. Girls School area (3020)m ²	3/3/1992 Tuesday

a. The project is partially financed by a Japanese loan.
b. Work load will be considered in awarding.
c. Each tender price is JD 200 and is non-refundable.
d. Last date for purchase of tender documents is February 16, 1992.
e. Offers shall be submitted to the Government Directorate before 13:30 local time on the mentioned date.

Chairman, Central Tenders Committee
Government Tenders Directorate
Eng. Basheer Al Jaghbeer

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
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Hope for Day Two

WHILE it is still premature to judge the Moscow multilateral peace talks one way or another in view of the fact that the first day was largely ceremonial and rhetorical, there is nevertheless no escape from the conclusion that the absence of Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians from the conference will dampen any initial expectations that the gathering is off to a good start. The Syrian boycott of the 40-nation meeting was rather expected because of Damascus' long-held views that progress in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations must precede the discussion of regional issues. But the refusal to accommodate the Palestinian delegation and give it an opportunity to speak out on regional concerns was something that cannot be described except as a big setback. After all, the Palestinian decision to participate in the Moscow peace talks was not taken lightly or without great misgivings. To wound the Palestinian side for its wise and enlightened verdict in favour of the Moscow forum by splitting hairs once again on where the members of the Palestinian team come from and at the end refusing them entry because of that is a step backward.

As for the contents of the discourses offered by most of the non-Arab participants, one also notices that they were indeed long on the virtues of peace, on which we all agree, but short on emphasis of the root causes of the conflict in the Middle East, the core of which is of course the Palestinian problem. To hear one distinguished speaker after the other list the benefits of regional peace and cooperation without directly and explicitly linking that lofty ideal to the need for Israeli withdrawal was a disappointment, to say the least. In this context, it was no surprise to see the Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy skip completely the reference to U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 as sine qua non for regional harmony and development. But to hear other speakers echoing similar sentiments in complete isolation from the heart of the matter in the Middle East could only lend weight to the rationale of those parties which decided to stay away from the Moscow conference, including the U.N., and also undermine the conviction of the Arab countries that have opted to give its deliberations the benefit of the doubt.

As the foreign minister, Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber, summed up the situation in his speech yesterday, there is no way to realise regional cooperation which we all want without addressing effectively the Palestinian problem. It is one thing to deal with the two sets of issues concurrently or in parallel, which Jordan accepts, and quite another to divorce them from one another, as seems the case till now in the Russian capital.

Another unboly separation also appeared on Day One of the meeting when one speaker after the other made faint or no reference at all to Israel's massive nuclear capability as a source of instability and as a subject worthy of regional disarmament negotiations. Clearly there is no way that serious efforts to rid the area of mass destruction weapons can come to fruition without the inclusion of Israel's nuclear and thermonuclear arsenals in the package deal being contemplated for the Middle East. The nations of the region look for an enlightened sense of security and stability based on multilateral disarmament, balanced development based on reducing the gap between the haves and the have-nots and pluralistic democracy to assure long term domestic peace and stability.

Maybe Day Two of the Moscow multilateral conference will be more fruitful and productive than the first. We are not in too much hurry to see results in one day, but we are eager to see the talks proceed on the right course, right away.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily echoed Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shakir's statement at a meeting with Parliament that Jordan's participation in the peace talks is totally based on the concept of implementing U.N. Security Council Resolution 342. This statement was a message directed to the Israeli government and to all the participants in the Moscow multinational talks, said the paper. What the prime minister was keen to underline is the fact that Jordan can by no means accept any partial solutions or any separate treaty with the Israelis as it strives to see all Arab lands occupied since 1967 liberated, the paper said. It said that the restoration of Arab lands and rights usurped in the 1967 war is a prerequisite for the attainment of peace based on justice; if Israel persisted in its stand of rejecting Arab just demands, any talk about agreements over water, the environment and other matters would be futile and unacceptable. Jordan's participation in the Moscow talks, the paper said, is designed to sound the atmosphere and the initial steps and not to embark on meaningful negotiations before concrete progress is achieved at the bilateral talks, the paper explained. Unless Israel makes it clear to the international community that it is serious in pursuing the path of just peace and end its arrogance and injustices it is practicing against the Palestinians, and unless the Washington bilaterals achieve a headway, the paper said, there can be no hope of working out any agreement in Moscow.

SAWT AL SHAAB daily echoed the same views, noting that Jordan's participation in the Moscow parley came after a careful study of the world situation and developments on the political scene. The paper said that Jordan reiterated that the multinational conference can by no means serve as a substitute for the bilateral talks, and unless the Israelis show willingness to accept the international legitimacy and implement U.N. resolutions, there can be no hope for the Moscow parley to achieve any fruitful results. The paper said that Jordan, which had been seeking an international conference on the Middle East conflict, saw in the Moscow parley a good chance to present the Arab case and enlist the other nations of the world's help to resolve the conflict. Israel, as is known to all, does not want a just peace and shuns U.N. resolutions while continuing its drive to build more settlements on Arab land, but the Arabs have a duty to present the facts before the world and make Israel face the moment of truth, said the daily. The paper said that Arab countries coordination at such an important parley is of vital importance so as to win backing from the world community for Arab just rights.

Economic Forum

The need for bank mergers

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

A seminar on "banking merger" was organised by the Union of Arab bank in Amman this week. The seminar discussed this issue in its general context but the emphasis was, of course, on mergers in the Arab framework. The implicit conception was that mergers among Arab banks are warranted on two major counts: First, to remedy a presumed state of overbanking and second, to address the cases of troubled banks which may develop into full-fledged failures.

When it comes to overbanking, the scientific approach to this issue necessitates that we start by measuring the level of banking to determine how much a certain country is overbanked (or even underbanked). And, naturally, there must be a unified and acceptable yardstick to measure the degree of banking. Such a yardstick is missing not only at the pan-Arab level but also at the domestic one!

Now the absence of a yardstick is a procedural or methodological issue but we have still a more problematic aspect of the issue of overbanking that relates to substance. Even if we find, after scientific scrutiny, that a country is overbanked, will it be right to remedy this "oddy" through mergers? The crucial point here is that overbanking is a product of the market economy. Centrally-planned economies do not allow it to rise in the first place, let apart permitting it to grow. Therefore, overbanking will have,

first, to be accepted and, second, to be left to market forces to tackle it if we want to adhere to the teachings of market economy. To our mind, the best stance central banks can take here is to devise a policy of effective incentives that allure bank mergers. What constitutes an "effective" bundle of incentives and what does not, is an irrelevant question because any system of incentives that fails to allure mergers must be deemed as ineffective, and thereafter, should be immediately changed, no matter what it says.

The second major plausible justification for mergers among banks is the case of faltering banks. The idea is that if we put two weak banking units together, we may get one strong unit. But there is, of course, no guarantee that we do not end up with one bigger weak unit.

Another situation is the case where we want merger to take place between a strong bank and a weak one on the assumption that the former will rescue the latter. Again, there is no guarantee that the weak bank will not end up sinking the healthy one. However, assuming that it will not, this process obviously entails a cost — the strong bank will have to be rewarded for undertaking such a risky job. Now the crucial question is who is going to foot the bill? If the answer is the treasury, as is normally the case, decision-makers must be sure in advance that this is nationally

and politically acceptable. The case where mergers are conceived to take place among strong banking units is not relevant for the sake of formulating banking or economic policies because these units will independently take the decision to merge if merger serves their interests.

In summation, the worst possibility is to impose merger on banks; this will heal a problem only to create new problems. Even in the exceptional cases where a banking unit is exposed to the danger of bankruptcy or liquidation, the imposition of merger entails underwriting its expenses from the taxpayer money. Otherwise, the monetary authorities will not be entitled to decree the whole process (except when the economy is to be run by the power of martial law). In effect, this underwriting means purchasing the ailing banking unit by the treasury.

It might be high time for us in Jordan and in Arab countries with market economies to start to accept the verdict of the market forces with regard to ailing banking units, even if such a verdict means the liquidation or bankruptcy of these units. The interests of the small depositors must be catered to through a modern system of deposit insurance. The right point of departure here is not to waste time planning mergers, but building and articulating that system.

Abu Jaber: Security is founded upon the inner stability of nation-states

The Palestinian problem lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict

Following is the address made by Jordanian Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber at the multilateral talks on the Middle East in Moscow, Tuesday, Jan. 28, 1992.

THE PEACE CONFERENCE HELD in Madrid, on Oct. 30, 1991, was a watershed in the troubled history of our region, where the hopes of the peoples of the Middle East for security and progress were rekindled and we embarked, together, on the long and difficult path to peace and prosperity. Our presence today in Moscow, testifies to the enduring nature of our commitment to those ideals. Now, representatives of the parties to the process, its co-sponsors, and states from other regions of the world are gathered to put the peace process on a regional footing. This is a development that Jordan welcomes, and we take this opportunity to state again our commitment to peace, and to pledge, once more, all our efforts, resources and experience to the attainment of that noble goal.

The possibility of resolving one of the most intractable disputes in the world, is a chance which must not be wasted. We have the opportunity to elaborate, and adopt measures to realise, a conceptual structure for the most vital issues in the Middle East today: regional security, economic development, the refugee issue and humanitarian concerns, water, energy and the protection of the environment. Within such a framework, inter-state and ethnic or religious conflicts can be more easily and peacefully resolved, and the way will be open for all members of the Middle East community to employ their natural and human resources in cooperation and harmony rather than in competition and conflict. The consequences of failure would be extremely serious, especially in view of the grave perils inherent in the political economy of despair and the availability of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Every state in the region, and beyond, will be vulnerable to dangers beyond imagining.

One may wonder whether effective security arrangements can be made there while there are unresolved conflicts, in which some states are, in theory, at war with others, or do not recognise the right of others to exist; or while there are large communities with no defined national status, which cannot be expected to accept responsibilities without rights. We certainly have no illusions about the complexity of the issues that face us. We are conscious of the difficulties involved in the enterprise of reconciling political differences in a non-political framework; how, in essence to achieve security if there is no peace, and how to achieve peace if there is no security. The way out of this dilemma is surely to work along parallel lines, integrating peace and security into a regional framework which both establishes the bases on which peace can be achieved, and creates the conditions in which it can be securely maintained.

This conference has been convened in conformity with the principles of the U.N. Charter to uphold the provisions of international law, and to protect its legitimacy. At the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a cardinal principle of international law: the non-admissibility of acquisition of territory by war. Jordan has always maintained that the basis of an equitable and sustainable peace must stem from the U.N. Charter, and must uphold the will of the international community, embodied in U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, calling for the exchange of territory for peace while safeguarding the security of all states in the region, including Israel.

We would like to have seen Palestinians from outside the occupied territories as well as those from East Jerusalem represented here today. After all, this conference deals with regional problems beyond the reach of those living in the occupied territories. Their presence in the bilateral talks is of great relevance since these deal with measures to establish the interim self-government authority. Such an arrangement, however, cannot be logically and practically expected to address problems such as that of the refugees, most of whom live outside their homeland.

Without the presence of diaspora Palestinians, this conference cannot reach any reasonable solutions to the problems of the region: water, disarmament, regional development and the environment. Israel cannot demand recognition while at the same time absolving itself from its historic responsibility towards the Palestinian people. We in Jordan, cannot be made to shoulder the responsibility of the diaspora Palestinians.

Experience has taught us that a complex peace process requires political will and good faith from all parties to the negotiations. It cannot, then, make sense for Israel to violate international law by building new settlements in the occupied territories and expanding existing ones, while the future status of the land in question is being negotiated. The status of Jerusalem varies in the minds of different peoples. Israel, for instance, speaks of a Jerusalem that encompasses one fifth of the West Bank, while the world at large thinks of it simply as the walled Holy City, a meeting place of the shrines of the three great monotheistic religions. We in Jordan understand its status in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 242 as an integral part of the occupied territories. The Holy City is the symbol, and essence of peace in the region: A city beyond political expediency, that could serve as a spiritual and pragmatic model for conflict resolution. But peace can never be ensured unless the supremacy of international law is upheld. Arab sovereignty over East Jerusalem must therefore be restored within the context of an inter-faith agreement, guaranteeing free access to the religious shrines of worshippers of all faiths. Only then, can Jerusalem serve once more, as a shining example, to the rest of the world, of what can be achieved when true peace is the objective of nations.

Brute force should never be an acceptable means for the settlement of disputes. Rather, international law and the will of the international community, applied with integrity and consistency, are the only viable bases for the regulation of conduct between sovereign states. It has always been Jordan's tradition to act accordingly. His Majesty King Hussein expressed this very clearly in his address to the European Parliament at Strasbourg on Sept. 11, 1991, on which occasion he said: "Power ... must be identified with a sense of responsibility and the strictest adherence to lofty principles and ideals ... wars must be averted ... weapons of mass destruction must be controlled and eventually eliminated."

How can anyone truly calculate and comprehend the impact of the suffering inflicted upon, the innocent victims, the civilian population and the children like those of Palestine and Iraq?

Many of our problems with which we must contend are international. It is the intention of the Jordanian delegation to seek in these meetings the adoption of an agenda which will address, at the same time, the inter-connected and related problems of security, peace, humanitarian concerns and economic disparities. We do not believe that it is possible to have peace while an arms race escalates and the quest for strategic domination intensifies.

Nor can economic cooperation, trade and investment be tackled without reference to the issues of water resources, demography and the endemic problem of indebtedness. Without peace and stability neither humanitarian concerns nor democratic practices can take root and develop. In short, the states of the Middle East, need security and regional cooperation mechanisms that address their problems in other than military terms.

Jordan has a special interest in seeking inter-regional and international structures for peace and cooperation. There is a gross imbalance between the political role which Jordan has played in the past, and which it is being asked to play in the present and

future, and between its financial and economic capabilities; deprived of natural resources on the one hand, and of natural markets and trading partnerships on the other, Jordan has had to shoulder the integration of successive waves of refugees, returnees and other migrants. We are proud to have sustained our humanitarian tradition, in spite of an overburdened economy in an unstable region. But the short-term cost of the rehabilitation of the recent 300,000 returnees, estimated at \$4.5 billion, is too high for Jordan to absorb. Jordan's needs are not simply for credits, loans, subsidies and grants; our most urgent need is for new arrangements which will take the pressure off our society and economy.

Security, therefore, is not simply a question of arms control, nuclear non-proliferation agreements, and so on. Security is founded upon the inner stability of nation-states.

This inner stability can only be achieved when there is a healthy relationship between government and governed, when basic human needs are guaranteed and legally protected, when governments are able to provide the resources necessary to achieve a decent standard of living for all. It is regrettable, in our view, that this wider concept of security has not, in the past, been understood or accepted by many. The division of wealth and capital into unproductive and dangerous activities, such as military escalation, deprives the whole region of the investments which it needs. With the adoption of this concept of security and greater cooperation between states, such as the one we seek, to lay the foundations for the future, the material disparities that currently undermine the security of many of the states of the region, will be eliminated.

It would be discriminatory as well as self-defeating to exclude certain countries from the benefits flowing from the peace dividend of the regional approach to economic development and reconstruction. Jordan recognises that peace-making ultimately depends on

collective effort. The development of common interests will serve as a solid foundation for the institutional framework envisaged for the administration of regional security and cooperation. We believe that the Helsinki process provided a sound precedent for the purpose of addressing humanitarian issues where people count.

We, therefore, view a cooperative, global framework for the resolution of our interconnected regional problems — a conference on security and cooperation for the Middle East — as the structure most likely to yield lasting resolutions, satisfactory to all.

We believe that such a model can eliminate the political economy of despair, and provide a route to democratisation, freedom of expression, human rights. The alternative, political economy of peace, security and progress proposals for a regional development fund, a debt sinking fund, and a regional development and reconstruction bank have already been made. A regional mechanism, to regulate and supervise arms control as well as a regional water regime, should be considered. Collective effort, facilitated by communication and cooperation in the face of common challenges, is the key to success in these areas.

In conclusion, it is the sincere hope of the Jordanian delegation that we shall be able to look at our problems objectively and dispassionately, that we shall be able to overcome prejudiced and confrontational points of view, and that we shall have the courage to make difficult even when they appear to upset previously accepted notions and positions. We must be prepared to enter into the process, with our minds fixed firmly upon the future, and not the past; to make our choices, not for the exigencies of a given moment, but for the viability of all our tomorrows.

For only then can peace, security and prosperity in the Middle East be guaranteed, and only then will the generations to come judge our endeavours as worthy of our ideals.

make something clear. What we are embarking upon here in Moscow is in no way a substitute for what we are trying to promote in the bilateral negotiations. Only the bilateral talks can address and one day resolve the basic issues of territory, security and peace which the parties have identified as the core elements of a lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

But it is also true that these bilateral negotiations do not take place in a vacuum, and that the condition of the region at large will affect them. In short, the multilateral talks are intended as a complement to the bilateral

territory, security and peace are core elements of peace between Arabs and Israel

Baker urges prompt engagement in Mideast peace negotiations

Following is the address made by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker before the organisational meeting for the multilateral negotiations on the Middle East in Moscow Tuesday, Jan. 28, 1992.

Foreign Minister Kozyrev, distinguished delegates,

Less than three months ago, history was made in Madrid. There, in an unprecedented gathering, Israel and its Arab neighbours sat directly across the table from one another. Immediately after, bilateral negotiations began: between Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Syria, and Israeli and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

We have now witnessed three rounds of bilateral negotiations in

as many months. In every case, the parties are engaging on substantive issues. And even when the parties are seemingly bogged down in procedural wrangles, they re for the most part the ones who are sorting them out, resolving their problems in face-to-face negotiations.

I do not mean to suggest we are satisfied with all that has transpired or naive about the hurdles and challenges that lie ahead. As I said in Madrid, we must crawl before we can walk and we must walk before we can run. We are not running, and there are those who would say that we are not even walking. But we are moving, and that is key, for all the potentially good ideas and formulas for peace count for little in the

absence of an agreed upon process to engage them. And such a process of direct engagement — a process designed to lead to comprehensive peace on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 — is now well underway.

We meet here today in newly independent and newly democratic Russia. I find it hard to imagine any setting being more fitting. As recently as a few years ago, few would have even dared to dream that Russia would be going through the profound transformation we are now witnessing. This should tell us something; simply put, where there is a vision and where there is courage, there is also possibility and promise.

We have gathered to explore new possibilities for the Middle East. As you all know, the invitation to the Madrid conference stated that those parties who wished to attend multilateral negotiations would convene two weeks after the opening of the conference to organise those negotiations. Well, I am afraid we are a bit late. But it is my hope — and it should be our determination — that what we are embarking upon today will prove to have been well worth waiting for.

What is it that we are here to begin? We are here to organise ourselves in preparation for a process that with time will address issues common to all the peoples of the Middle East. De-

spite the political issues that currently divide governments and peoples, there are real ties that bind the peoples of the Middle East together. They breathe the same air, drink the same water, are vulnerable to the same diseases, and have all suffered from the very tragic costs of war.

It is for these reasons that we have come together — to address those issues that are common to the region and that do not necessarily respect national or geographic boundaries. These issues can best be addressed by the concerted efforts of regional parties together with the support of the international community and the resources and expertise that it can provide.

Let me take this opportunity to

(Continued on page 5)

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Israel gains in Mideast peace talks

By Jack Redden
Reuters

JERUSALEM — Israeli and Arab representatives sat down together in Moscow on Tuesday without a Palestinian in sight, the latest in a series of gains for the Jewish state since the start of Middle East peace talks.

"They will not be missed," Defence Minister Moshe Arens said, dismissing the boycott by the Palestinian delegation to the Moscow talks.

"The multilateral conference is a conference between governments... the Palestinians are not a government and will not be a government," he told reporters.

The incident both underlined the Israeli government's view that Palestinians will never be a nation and demonstrated the extent to which the talks have suited Israel since starting in October.

While Palestinians increasingly grumble about the lack of progress in negotiations to end at least some of the control of Israeli occupation forces, Israel's initial fears that Middle East talks would lead to important compromises appear to have dissipated.

The direct talks with Palestinians, which are supposed to lead to agreement by next October on limited self-rule for the 1.75 Arab residents of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, are still bogged down in procedural questions.

The Israelis and Palestinians met briefly in Madrid but adjourned when Israel insisted on a change of venue. When they reconvened in Washington in December, the delegations never got out of the lobby.

They at least entered the meeting room in the last session in January, but adjourned again after three days with the venue for the next meeting still in dispute.

Now Israel has sat down to open the Moscow talks with Arab states that included Jordan and Saudi Arabia, even if Syria and Lebanon boycotted. The Palestinians fumed outside, excluded because the representatives they wanted were unacceptable to Israel.

Israel's goal for years had been to negotiate with surrounding Arab states while ignoring the Palestinians.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The Madrid peace conference last October was the first time Israel had negotiated with Palestinians living in areas captured in the 1967 Middle East war — probably the main Palestinian achievement so far.

But the Moscow talks, at Israeli insistence, have continued to exclude Palestinians refugees from the original 1948 conflict or Arab residents of East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed after its capture in 1967.

The presence of Jerusalem Arabs could undermine Israeli claims of sovereignty while the presence of Palestinians from abroad would focus attention on Israel's ban on refugees returning to the homes they lost in earlier wars.

While subjects important to Palestinians are either sidelined — the refugee problem was dropped from the Moscow agenda after Israeli objections — or are

bogged down in slow-moving discussion, Israel can point to a series of diplomatic benefits.

"We are approaching the end of Israel's international isolation," Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir declared this week following the establishment of diplomatic relations with China.

Israel had made diplomatic ties the price of admission to Middle East peace talks — the same device it used to secure the restoration of ties with the Soviet Union just before the Madrid peace talks.

"Now there are prospects of similar moves with India, Angola and other African states. In recent weeks, Russia resumed relations with U.S. and the newly-independent republics are doing the same," said Mr. Shamir.

Mr. Shamir, who vows never to relinquish an inch of land to Palestinians, had to be pushed into the talks by Washington but has now made continuation a centerpiece of his campaign for reelection later this year.

Palestinians, in contrast, are deeply divided over the peace talks. Some opponents have turned to armed attacks on Jewish settlers while advocates appear on the defensive at the lack of progress.

A Palestinian withdrawal from the peace talks could mean missing the last opportunity to halt Mr. Shamir's drive to settle Jews on occupied land, a gradual annexation.

Continuing means bargaining with Israel from a position of weakness, hoping talks will eventually lead to Palestinians regaining some control over their occupied land.

Baker urges engagement

(Continued from page 4)

Economic development

negotiations; each can and will buttress the other.

This is true for three reasons. First, multilateral negotiations on regional issues will send a powerful signal that all parties are unequivocally committed to peace and reconciliation.

Second, multilateral negotiations on regional issues will address on their own merits a range of regional problems crying out for resolution. There are pressing human problems — poverty, refugees, disease, and above all, the danger of war — that need to be addressed. It would be tragic and irresponsible to put these problems of real and profound human need on hold while waiting for peace to come.

Third, multilateral negotiations on regional issues can begin to improve the lives of people and create a basis for greater stability in the area. As progress is made, as tangible benefits emerge, a vision of what real peace might mean will also begin to emerge.

Today, we will be hearing statements by delegations from the region and from others outside the region. I would hope that everyone would take advantage of this opportunity to discuss how we can best approach the challenges common to all who live or have a stake in the well-being of the Middle East.

Tomorrow, we move from the conference hall to working groups where the important task of organizing the discreet groups and determining how they will proceed will begin. The regional parties will have the primary responsibility for setting the agendas. The co-sponsors, along with the international community, are prepared to play an active supporting role. I would like to say just a few words about each of the five groups.

The environment

From groundwater contamination to oil spills, Middle Eastern countries face daunting environmental challenges which are mounting daily under the twin pressures of population growth and industrialization.

Initially, an environment working group could be the catalyst for the exchange of scientific findings on the extent of shared environmental problems. The Gulf of Aqaba might be a good place to start.

Over time, the group could expand to explore parallel or joint projects on the region's common problems ranging from preservation of archaeological

sites to waste disposal. Again, the agenda could be as expansive as the regional parties define.

Water

Assuring reliable supplies of this precious resource is a fundamental security — as well as economic — challenge to all the regional parties, especially in the arid, drought-prone conditions of the Middle East.

A water working group could begin to explore the dimensions of this challenge, beginning with seminars to exchange forecasts of demand and available supply and leading over time to cooperative activities in the areas of water pricing and allocation policies. Desalination techniques, and reuse of brackish water. Interested extra-regional parties could share expertise, technologies and resources.

The issue of refugees

Almost all of the conflicts that punctuate the history of the Middle East have been the occasion of a substantial number of individuals leaving their homes. Often, they have had to live for months or years in temporary, crowded camps. This experience is common to all too many of the region's peoples. It is not our objective to ascribe cause or attribute responsibility for the refugee problem. Rather, it is to see whether the parties of this region,

helped by states from outside, can provide needed resources to improve the lot of these men, women and children.

Arms control and regional security

The Gulf war was a vivid reminder of just how destructive patterns of arms acquisition and production have and can become — undermining the very security they were intended to promote. An arms control working group could begin to tackle this issue, but in a way that recognizes the vital security interests at stake for all the parties of the region.

In the first instance, we envision offering the regional parties our thinking about potential approaches to arms control, drawing upon a vast reservoir of experience stemming from attempts to regulate military competition in Europe and other regions. From this base, the group might move forward to considering a set of modest confidence-building or transparency measures covering notifications of selected military-related activities and crisis-prevention communications. The purpose would be to lessen the prospects for incidents and miscalculation that could lead to heightened competition or even conflict.

In our view, and again, based upon our own experience with arms control, we believe such an approach offers the best chance

for success. At the same time, we would not discourage or rule out efforts to decrease the level of militarization, especially involving those systems most likely to contribute to instability amidst crises. Eventually, and as called for by President Bush's 1991 initiative, we would hope to see the level of conventional arms reaching the region greatly diminished and weapons of mass destruction eliminated.

Let me close with one thought. We live in an age when many of the world's regions, once ravaged by war, are now coming together. We see this above all here in Europe, but we see it too in Asia and in Central and Latin America. The results are obvious: peace and security, prosperity, better quality of life. Increasingly, the Middle East stands out, but not in the way that should make any of us proud. Our challenge — our opportunity — is to begin the process of making the Middle East a region, not just in the geographic sense, but in the political, the economic, and, indeed, in the human sense as well.

This gathering here today reflects the commitment and resources of those outside the region who want to assist in this effort. The co-sponsors, the United States together with Russia, strongly encourage the parties in the region for whom this process offers real benefits, to engage promptly and fully. This is a rare opportunity; do not let it pass by.

Gaza — the forgotten strip of land

By Nidal M. Ibrahim
Special to the Jordan Times

GAZA — Riding in a service taxi on the road to Tel Aviv along the smoothly-paved, winding road, one can see lush green-farms all around. Rows upon rows of plants and trees dot the countryside.

As the taxi turns south and heads towards the occupied Gaza Strip, a remarkable transformation takes place. The sprinklers, spraying a gentle mist on the lush vegetation become a fading memory. Road signs directing traffic disappear. Potholes become frequent. Trash piles on the side of the roads are common.

Welcome to Gaza. Although the peace process and the intifada have brought a greater awareness of the Palestinians and the occupation, the Gaza Strip remains relatively obscure and poor. Most media coverage and references to the occupied territories usually focus on the West Bank.

"I think (Gaza) is an ignored satellite in the solar system," says Yusra Barbari, chairperson of the Palestine Women's Union in the Gaza Strip. "The West Bank differs from this situation because many journalists visit Jerusalem and visit

the West Bank. As a result, the West Bank gets help."

The feeling that Gaza has been forgotten is widely shared by residents of the 340-kilometre strip of land that hugs the Mediterranean coast and is home to about 800,000 people.

"It's true," says Alia Al Shawa, who runs a hotel that is frequented by journalists and diplomats. "They used to say that Gaza is forgotten by all the world and it's true."

Part of the reason for Gaza's isolation is its recent history. Controlled by Egypt after the 1948 war that saw the breakup of Palestine, it was lost to Israel during the 1967 Middle East war.

"After occupation, the relationship between Gaza and Egypt was cut," Ms. Barbari says. "Especially after Camp David, when Egypt started neglecting the services they offered to Gazans."

The West Bank, on the other hand, has had a close relationship with Jordan, even after the Israelis occupied it in the aftermath of the 1967 war.

"Jordan plays a great role in following the situation in the West Bank," she says, "even after His Majesty King Hussein renounced the Kingdom's legal ties to the West Bank (on

Aug. 1, 1988)."

The West Bank has more place to grow, despite the ever-increasing land confiscations. The Gaza Strip, meanwhile, "is one of the most populated areas in the world without hinterland," says the 68-year-old Ms. Barbari.

Despite the past neglect, the intifada forced the world to focus on the long-forgotten stretch of land. It was, after all, in the Jabaliya Refugee Camp in Gaza that the intifada began.

It was the intifada that prompted — demanded — journalists to visit and cover the Gaza Strip. It was through these reports that the world slowly became aware of the devastation, hopelessness and poverty rampant in Gaza.

"Journalists who want to come here have to be courageous because when they come here, things happen," Ms. Barbari says.

In addition to courage, journalists have to contend with the Israeli occupation forces which restrict access to the area, and the strikes that have become a daily fact of life in the occupied territories.

The feeling that the Gaza Strip has been forgotten is evident even in the streets. Many Gaza inhabitants point to the

intifada and the vastly reduced coverage it is receiving in the West and the world press.

"A lot of things happen here we never see in the news," says Mohammad, 43, who runs a store that sells textiles and cloths.

He complains that the death toll that is at times mentioned in the news no longer represents the loss of human lives. It is, he says, simply a way to measure the cost, to the Palestinians, of the intifada without involving the emotional and human aspects of the death toll.

Has the Gaza Strip, now that the intifada has more or less come to be viewed by the West as simply another outburst in the cycle of violence that has characterized the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, been forgotten?

"Someway, somehow yes," said Sabah Al Alami, an advocate in Gaza.

The writer has recently returned from a week-long visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



A corner of Gaza City (Photo by Nidal Ibrahim)

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SPORTS NEWS IN BRIEF

Senegal sacks coach after soccer flop

DAKAR (R) — Claude Le Roy, French coach of Senegal's national soccer team, paid the inevitable penalty for failure in the African Nations' Cup. He was fired. "Le Roy was relieved of his duties by the minister for youth and sport," state radio announced. Hosts Senegal were knocked out in the quarterfinals. Ivory Coast won the Nations' Cup for the first time Sunday, beating favourites Ghana 11-10 in a penalty shoot-out. The two sides had been level 0-0 after extra time.

Henkel named Woman Athlete of Year

MOUNTAIN VIEW, California (R) — World high jump champion Heike Henkel is an overwhelming choice of track field news as Woman Athlete of the Year, the magazine said. The German won 30 out of 32 competitions in 1991, claiming both the indoor and outdoor world titles. In voting by an international panel, Henkel outpolled world 100 and 200-metre champion Katrin Krabbe, also of Germany, and Scotland's Liz McColgan, who won the 10,000 metres gold medalist. Top pole vaulter Sergei Bubka of Ukraine earlier was selected the publication's Male Athlete of the Year.

Wobbly Wombats ordered off court

SYDNEY (R) — Minor League Australian Basketball Telitgow Wombats were ordered off court after officials deemed them too drunk to continue. The Wombats were wobbling all over the place and posed a risk to themselves and opposition players, stadium manager Alan Jones said. The Australian Associated Press (AAP) reported Tuesday. The match was the last of the night in a basketball carnival Sunday in the coastal town of Wollongong, 90 kilometres south of Sydney. "There was some doubt the game should have started at all," said Jones, adding that the Wombats turned abusive when told the game was over at halftime. "They threatened me, using obscene language and demanded their entry fee back," he said.

Capriati beats Sabatini in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AP) — American teenager Jennifer Capriati saved two match points to beat Argentina's Gabriela Sabatini 6-3, 6-7 (2-7), 7-6 (7-4) Monday in a tennis exhibition match. The 15-year-old Capriati, who lost to Sabatini in the quarterfinals of the Australian Open last week, won the first set easily in the first Pacific Bank Challenge match. But the 21-year-old Sabatini, who is ranked third in the world, rallied to take the second set 7-6 at the Victoria Park Tennis Court. The sixth-ranked Capriati took the match when she saved two match points to take the third set into a tie-breaker which she won 7-4. In a certain-raiser to the main match, Indonesian Yayuk Basuki beat American Lori McNeil 6-1, 1-6, 6-3.

Zvereva upset in Tokyo Indoor

TOKYO (R) — Seventh seed Natalia Zvereva suffered a straight sets defeat in the first round of the Pan Pacific Women's Indoor Tennis Tournament Tuesday. Wimbledon doubles champion Zvereva, ranked 24th in the singles, was upset by Australian qualifier Renee Stubbs 6-4, 7-6 (7-5). "That's probably my best win. It feels nice to finally beat someone a lot higher than me," said the 161st-ranked Stubbs. Top seed and defending champion Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina and second seed Martina Navratilova had first-round byes. Navratilova, runner-up here last year, begins her quest for an unprecedented 15th career title in women's tennis Wednesday. In November, she beat world number one Monica Seles of Yugoslavia in the Virginia Slims of California to equal Chris Evert's record of 157.

Strnadova advances in New Zealand

AUCKLAND (AP) — Top-seeded Andrea Strnadova of Czechoslovakia advanced to the second round of the \$100,000 Nutri-Metics Classic women's tennis tournament Tuesday with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Croatia's Nadine Ercegovic. Second-seed Sabine Hack of Germany was not as fortunate, falling to Australian Jenny Byrne. Byrne, making a comeback after being off the tour with injuries for more than a year, beat Hack 7-5, 7-6 (7-4). Byrne survived a scare while up 6-3 in the tiebreak. She turned her ankle and had to have several minutes of treatment before continuing. "I was O.K. once I started walking to the chair, but I was quite distressed at first," said Byrne. In other first-round matches, third-seeded Larisa Savchenko-Neiland of Latvia defeated Isabel Cueto of Germany 6-4, 6-3; fifth-seeded Alexia Dechaume of France beat Denisa Szabova of Czechoslovakia 6-3, 6-2; and Raffaella Reggi-Concato of Italy, the sixth seed, defeated Ann Grossman of the United States 6-2, 6-4.

Australia asks 'Magic' to play

SYDNEY (R) — Australia's basketball authorities have invited American star Earvin "Magic" Johnson to play here after a medical official caused a furore by advising players to boycott him if he played in the Olympics. Johnson, who announced last November that he had tested positive for the HIV virus which causes the deadly disease AIDS, has been asked to captain an American all star team in a pre-Olympic tournament against the Australian national team in Canberra, said Basketball Australia. Johnson had been approached to lead a team of National Basketball Association (NBA) players on July 4.

Coach who took Egypt to World Cup quits for African failure

CAIRO (AP) — Mahmoud Al Gohary, who coached Egypt to the World Cup soccer finals last year, resigned Monday over the team's embarrassing showing in the just-ended African Cup of Nations championship.

He quit during a heated, chaotic hearing of the Youth and Sports Committee of the People's Assembly. Gohary had been called to testify on the national team's two first-round 1-0 losses to Zambia and Ghana, in the championships in Senegal.

Ghana eventually reached the tournament finals in Dakar, where it played to a scoreless draw with Ivory Coast Sunday, then lost the championship 11-10 in a penalty shoot-out. Nigeria finished third.

Chaos and heated debate marred the session when Gohary told committee members he had come to explain the Senegal failure to critics in Cairo's sporting press.

Committee members protested and threatened to walk out. As they objected that the session was a hearing and not a press conference, sportswriters walked out in protest.

Gohary followed them. He ignored attempts by Abdul Rahim Al Ghoul, the committee chairman, to persuade him to return.

The resignation was the tempestuous Gohary's second in just over two years and the third time he left the Egyptian helm.

In 1989, as he prepared the national team for Egypt's first World Cup appearance in 56 years, he quit in a suit over catcalls and insults by fans after the team lost a warmup game to Romania. The Egyptian Soccer Federation fired Gohary, 53, in October 1990 and replaced him with German Dietrich Weise.

The Egyptian bitterly denied defeat claims he had resigned.

Under Weise, the national team lost twice last September in the fifth All-Africa Games in Cairo, an embarrassment that brought President Hosni Mubarak into the picture.

He awarded Gohary the Order of the Republic, Egypt's highest decoration for sports, because of his success in leading Egypt to the World Cup in Italy. Faced with Mr. Mubarak's intercession, the chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Abdul Moneim Emara, dissolved the Soccer Federation and reinstated Gohary.

In Monday night's meeting, Gohary blamed his dismissal for the Dakar debacle.

He said Weise foolishly cancelled a programme he devised to prepare Egypt for the 1994 World Cup in the United States. That deprived Egypt of valuable international experience and the teamwork that would have resulted from playing together.

But he admitted that he overlooked evident shortcomings by the players because of good performances against European teams in December and January.

The Egyptians defeated Poland 4-0 and drew 0-0 in a return match. They whipped Romania 3-1, then tied 1-1 in the return. It surprised Czechoslovakia 2-0, then played a scoreless draw versus Norway.

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ASEAN leaders sign landmark agreements

SINGAPORE (R) — South East Asian Nations, worried by the merging economic alliances of North America and Europe, took a major step Tuesday towards transforming their booming region into a single market.

Leaders of the six members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) ended a two-day summit here by signing an agreement pledging to create a free trade area by the year 2008.

They also agreed to step up discussion of regional security, previously a taboo subject, and to cooperate in the development of a wide range of industries, from tourism to communications and finance.

The agreements reflected the six countries' increasing concerns about trade and security in the light of the end of the cold war and the development of what they fear may be trading blocs in Europe and North America.

"By following through the agreements swiftly, we will convince both domestic and foreign investors that ASEAN is a serious player in the new world order," Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said.

The leaders also signed a declaration welcoming the accession of Vietnam and Laos to the group's friendship treaty, seen as the first step to integrating Indochina into ASEAN.

Signing the pact were Brunei's Sultan Sir Hassan Bolkiah, Indonesia's President Suharto, Malaysian Prime Minister

Mahathir Mohamad, Philippine President Corason Aquino, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun.

Mr. Anand, who proposed the ASEAN free trade area (AFTA) idea last year, said he would cut Thai tariffs on ASEAN-manufactured products to a maximum of 30 per cent at the start of next year and aim for another cut to 20 per cent a year later.

The agreements begin "a new chapter for ASEAN and a new era for South Asia" he said.

AFTA aims to keep the region attractive to foreign companies and cut through the trade barriers most ASEAN members still erect to protect domestic markets. It would also allow freer access to the countries' market of nearly 320 million consumers.

The mechanism for AFTA, a common effective preferential tariff (CEPT), will start for 15 product sectors from January 1993. It aims to put in place a tariff of between zero and five per cent on capital goods.

Concern remains about an "opt-out" clause which would allow members to selectively delay participation in the tariff cuts, but officials expressed confidence that the option would not be abused.

"Before the 15 years are up I am quite confident more steps will be taken to realise more than we have put down here," Singapore Trade and Industry Minister Lee Hsien Loong said.

Second Beirut bank announces liquidation

BEIRUT (R) — A Lebanese bank, the second in two weeks, said it had gone into voluntary liquidation.

Bank Tohme, in a statement published Tuesday in Beirut's leading An Nahar newspaper, said it was halting its activities "while preserving in full the rights of its clients, agents and employees."

An Nahar said the bank's officials presented the central bank with "sufficient collateral to cover its obligations." Bank Tohme said it would begin reimbursing depositors soon.

The bank has a head office in Beirut and one branch outside the Lebanese capital.

Earlier this month Beirut's Libano-Bresilienne Bank announced it had gone into voluntary liquidation.

Central bank officials said they expected other banks to follow suit.

'Arab World is bad for investment'

ABU DHABI (R) — A leading Gulf business figure Tuesday bluntly told other Arabs hoping for Gulf handouts that investing in their economies was a waste of money.

"With the exception of the Gulf monarchies, the rest of the Arab World is bad for both short and long-term investment," Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Abdullah Al Mohairbi said.

Citing political instability in the region as a major drawback, he told Reuters it "discourages potential investors from throwing their money into these troubled regions."

"Name one Arab country that enjoys full security and stability and both the public and private sectors in the Gulf states would not hesitate to invest their money and resources in it," said Sheikh Mohairbi, who is also the deputy speaker of the United Arab Emirates Consultative Council.

"Following the invasion of Kuwait ... Gulf states became convinced that prospects for investing in non-oil-producing Arab countries did not exist," he added.

Views similar to Sheikh Mohairbi's are increasingly heard in private conversations in the Gulf but few people have expressed them so openly.

The six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — said last month they were setting up a \$10 billion fund to help poorer Arab countries.

Diplomats in the region said that only \$2 billion of the GCC fund would be disbursed initially and would go to Egypt, Syria and Morocco, which sent troops to help liberate Kuwait.

In contrast with previous Gulf aid, money would not be handed over to governments but given to private sector projects that prove economically sound, the diplomats said.

Times Jordan
Tel: 667171

CBJ official says Arab banking merger hinges on political will

By Samir Shafiq
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — "Am I dreaming? let it be, because dreams sometimes come true," said Ahmad Abdul Fattah, a senior official at the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), voicing his desire to see an Arab political determination as effective as to allow the creation of cross-border giant banks capable of standing tall on the international banking stage amid the challenges of global economic blocs.

Mr. Abdul Fattah, lecturing on banking merger during a seminar organised by the Arab Banks Union at Philadelphia Hotel, said he expected to hear soon of bank mergers in Oman, Kuwait, Lebanon in addition to Jordan in a drive to reform the banking sector in each of these countries.

He emphasised that the basic role of pushing bank mergers was tied to the will of monetary authorities in various Arab countries because these authorities were the most capable to define the targets, the methods and the legislative path for mergers and to provide the most attractive incentives to that end.

The CBJ official detailed seven factors which, he said, were exerting pressure towards bank mergers:

1) The existence of many banks in most Arab countries operating at a level that does not correspond with the requirements of growth and financial service.

These banks of law capital base usually trail in their ability to compete positively and are prone to quit the race or to merge by the monetary authorities to protect the whole banking sector.

2) The small markets of some Arab countries were unable to accommodate the high number of banks which, in turn, opted to extend credits at any cost and without sufficient evaluation of the borrower's creditworthiness.

This situation culminated with a noticeable increase in bad or doubtful debts and, therefore, has ushered in the merger theory to ease the troubles of some banks.

3) The development and growth of the Arab economies

makes it all the more important to have strong and financially sound banks able to serve and finance the national economies and, as a result, makes the merger approach more viable and even necessary.

4) The Gulf war clearly demonstrated the need for strong national banks to be associated one way or another with the higher national and pan-Arab levels within the context of Arab banking security. Such banks would be able to extract better financial terms when dealing with other international banks in addition to being better poised to deal on an equal par with big foreign banks.

5) The inability of small banking units to adopt most modern techniques and the best qualified personnel within a country's strategy to introduce "the economies of scale" in its banking industry to achieve best results at lowest cost.

6) The large Arab investments abroad require maintaining and strengthening the channels for quick and better flow of funds or surpluses to and from the international markets. This aspect makes it imperative on Arab banks abroad to merge and become "international windows" to serve national interests at home.

7) The speedy movement of European, Japanese and American banks in merging their operations threatens to leave Arab banks abroad in a weak, inactive and insecure position without serious efforts to merge.

Mr. Abdul Fattah said governments had a great role in helping banks merge through very attractive incentives and mediation efforts to resolve structure deficiencies of banks or wrangles between family members or rich persons having interests that impeded a banking merger.

He urged Arab governments not to opt for injecting funds, floating or investing in current banks, but rather to unify banking and accounting legislations, to give priority to

dealing with Arab banks, especially abroad, and to provide the right climate to ensure wider Arab investments, optimum banking growth and larger flow of inter-Arab funds.

The lecturer defended the option of the monetary authority of a country to force a merger if such a compulsory action was tantamount to causing a collapse in public confidence in the banking system if not taken. He saw the compulsory merger as a last resort for safeguarding the economic security of a nation.

However, Mr. Abdul Fattah pointed out to the following advantages that banks could benefit from should they decide to merge voluntarily:

1) Securing higher profit from the adoption of the "economies of scale" concept, as studies have confirmed that acts have actually decreased while operations recorded higher volume.

2) Securing better financial deals with other banks for various transactions and in obtaining larger credit lines from being in a stronger negotiating position.

3) Ability to enhance liquidity from wider venues, including the bank with which the merger occurred.

4) Enriching the administrative experience of the staff of the two merging units and reflecting their experience through contacts with customers.

5) Benefiting from tax or other financial government incentives.

The CBJ official examined some past merger attempts in the Arab World and said that none were of a magnitude to capture attention. He mentioned endeavours for mergers in Lebanon which, in general, have failed.

In Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Mr. Abdul Fattah said, mergers took place in the 1960s and the 80s respectively to remedy malfunctions at some banks, but he highlighted that in the UAE, the government had to provide big financial support to conclude the merger deals.

In Oman, the authorities have given the merger subject great importance, but, despite attractive incentives, banks there haven't shown any willingness to merge, according to Mr. Abdul Fattah. He said that in Kuwait, where the idea had been floated for quite some-

time, many banks were expected to merge soon under the influence of the government which owns a large equity in their capital.

The lecturer excluded some countries like Syria, Iraq and Libya, where the governments control the banking sectors, and focused on the Jordanian experience institutions operating in Jordan and showed that there were 15 commercial banks, seven of which not Jordanian. The Jordanian banks had a total of 236 branches and "cash offices" throughout the Kingdom while the non-Jordanian banks operated 48 branches, and one "cash office" in the country.

Investment banks numbered four and had a total of 21 branches and "cash offices" while six specialised credit institutions had a total branches and "cash offices" in the Kingdom.

In addition, four financial and real estate lending companies were spread in the country through 27 branches and one "cash office."

Mr. Abdul Fattah expanded the analysis on Jordan's banks saying that in 1973 there were only nine banks with an "operation figure" of JD 111.6 million, JD 85.8 million in assets and JD 61.8 million in credits. The figures in 1982 became 18 banks, JD 1.6 billion "operation figure," JD 1.17 billion in assets and JD 887 million in credits.

In 1991, the number of banks rose to 20 and the "operation figure" soared to JD 5.4 billion while assets totalled JD 3.9 billion and credits JD 1.9 billion.

The lecturer attributed the rising trend to the oil boom of the 70s and the large cash inflow, but, with signs of recession in the 80s and the regional economic gloom, the financial institutions became a burden as they stopped showing the successes of previous years and slow progress became evident.

Mr. Abdul Fattah said that the CBJ was now amidst a banking reform process which includes restructuring its institutions based on the policy of encouraging voluntary mergers against attractive incentives.

He admitted that the reaction so far has been encouraging enough as only one financial company merged with another one and, later, was transformed into an investment bank in accordance with the CBJ guidelines.

Other forms of changes which occurred in Jordan outside the definition of merger were the purchase of the Chase Bank by the Bank of Jordan and the purchase of the Bank of Credit and Commerce by the Business Bank. Mr. Abdul Fattah described the transactions as very smooth, beneficial and profitable.

The CBJ official mentioned an unsuccessful merger operation which took place in past years; although he did not mention any names, it was evident he was referring to the Islamic Investment House which was later transformed into the National Islamic Bank and liquidated after few months despite large cash infusion from the central bank.

Mr. Abdul Fattah said intensive consultations, now taking place under the umbrella of the CBJ to conclude a major combining a number of banks, were near finalisation. He referred to the Economic Security Committee decision to merge Petra Bank and Jordan Gulf Bank. But "due to heavy losses at Petra, the merger did not take place and serious discussions are underway to merge the Jordan Gulf Bank with another entity," Mr. Abdul Fattah added.

He outlined the following reasons for the general unsuccessful efforts to have Arab banks merge voluntarily:

1) The Arab banking is characterised by family ownership or by ownership by other people with various interests; therefore, they resist any form of change that would reduce their privileges and power.

2) The lack of proper and "super incentives" that would entice the owners to relinquish their high status.

3) The general economic slowdown has not hit some banks hard enough to prompt them to rethink their existence potential.

4) The absence of real and strong competition in quantity and quality.

5) The lack of harmony among the management circles of the banks.

6) Disagreement over the revaluation methods and details of the banks seeking to merge.

7) Lack of legislative acts to organise mergers.

8) The existence of alternatives to mergers, such as increasing the capital or the number of branches.

Macy files for bankruptcy protection

NEW YORK (R) — R.H. Macy Co., the legendary retailer whose New York store is considered the world's largest, was pushed to the brink by massive debts and recession and sought bankruptcy protection Monday after weeks of rescue talks unravelled.

The chapter 11 bankruptcy filing will give the 134-year-old retailer breathing space from its creditors while it tries to reorganise and continues to serve its customers.

"I am convinced that beginning this rehabilitation process is the best way to protect our valuable franchise," Macy chairman and chief executive officer Edward Finkelstein said in a statement.

As a sign of support, Chemical Bank Corp and Bankers Trust Co. set up \$600 million in financing so that Macy could continue buying merchandise and stocking shelves at its 251 stores. Suppliers, who had been holding back goods, fell into line and resumed shipments.

"I want to be the first guy to

ship to them because now I know I will get paid," said Bud Konheim, president of Nicole Miller Ltd., a maker of women's clothing based in New York.

Macy, which had nearly \$4 billion in debt from takeovers in the 1980s, has been skirting bankruptcy since recession took hold of the economy in July 1990.

A last-minute \$1 billion rescue plan proposed by CBS Inc. Chairman Laurence Tisch, who already owns 15.6 per cent of Macy's collapsed Friday when a major creditor, Prudential Insurance Co. of America, rejected terms of the deal.

On Saturday, Macy failed to make a crucial payment to suppliers, virtually ensuring the com-

pany would not get new merchandise shipments unless it obtained new credit.

In the end, its debts — assumed in a 1986 leveraged buy-out by senior managers and the 1988 acquisition of the Bullock's and I. Magnin chains — proved too heavy for the company to support.

"We worked day and night to find a suitable solution and ultimately came to the conclusion that filing for chapter 11 was best for Macy's future," Mr. Finkelstein said. Under chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code, a company is protected from creditors while it tries to work out a plan to repay its debts.

Macy, whose severely weak

Christmas sales last month sealed the company's fate, joins a list of major companies that have been forced into bankruptcy in the past two years.

At least a dozen of the United States' biggest store chains, including such illustrious names as Bloomingdale's, are operating out of bankruptcy court, and most of them landed there after taking on massive debts to expand or avoid being taken over. Industry analysts said the hasty over-expansion of the past decade left the country with far too

many stores.

In the aftermath, the industry's consolidation has been rushed along by the reckless binge of borrowing by the store groups, followed by a recession that has sapped consumer confidence and spending.

Macy's flagship store in Manhattan is touted as the world's largest. The company operates a total of 144 department stores, including 98 in the northeast and California 22 Bullock's stores, primarily in southern California, and 24 I. Magnin stores.

Financial Markets		
in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank		
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		
Date: 28/1/1992		
Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	.678	.680
Sterling Pound	1.2069	1.2129
Deutsche Mark	.4202	.4223
Swiss Franc	.4731	.4755
French Franc	.1234	.1240
Japanese Yen	.5403	.5430
Dutch Guilder	.3733	.3752
Swedish Krona	.1157	.1163
Italian Lira	.0560	.0563
Belgian Franc	.02036	.02046
Per 100		
Other Currencies		
Date: 28/1/1992		
Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7690	1.7780
Lebanese Lira	.0770	.0775
Saudi Riyal	.1805	.1815
Kuwaiti Dinar	—	—
Qatari Riyal	.1837	.1846
Egyptian Pound	.2000	.2150
Omani Riyal	1.7350	1.7440
UAE Dirham	.1837	.1846
Greek Drachma	.3610	.3700
Cypriot Pound	1.4815	1.5050
Per 100		

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.

One Sterling	1.7855/65	U.S. dollar
One U.S. dollar	1.1706/11	Canadian dollar
	1.6085/95	Deutschemark
	1.8115/25	Dutch guilders
	1.4290/97	Swiss francs
	5.4790/4840	Belgian francs
	33.15/19	French francs
	1208/1209	Italian lire
	125.55/65	Japanese yen
	5.8410/60	Swedish crowns
	6.3070/5120	Norwegian crowns
	6.2360/2410	Danish crowns
One ounce of gold	356.65/357.15	U.S. dollars

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in
ROADHOUSE

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at 8 p.m.

RAINBOW
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in
Naji Al Ali
Arabic

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Goulding hits deadlock on Yugoslav peace plan

KARLOVAC, Croatia (R) — United Nations envoy Marrack Goulding said Tuesday he had failed to persuade a headline Serb leader in Croatia to accept a U.N. plan to deploy up to 10,000 peacekeeping troops in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Goulding travelled to Zagreb to meet Croatian leaders after several hours of talks Monday with Milan Babic, who heads the self-proclaimed Serbian Republic of Krajina inside Croatia.

Mr. Babic's acceptance is vital if the U.N. plan is to help end seven months of fighting between Croatian militia and Serb irregular forces backed by the Yugoslav army.

"He maintained his objections," Mr. Goulding said as he walked across the snow-covered frontlines from Krajina into Croatia-held territory in Karlovac, 50 kilometers southwest of the Croatian capital.

"On some points I was able to reassure him a little," said Mr. Goulding, a U.N. under-secretary in charge of peacekeeping forces.

"But I regret he was not in a position yet to say he would accept the U.N. plan, and that he had his people would be ready to cooperate with a peacekeeping force if it was deployed in the areas we intend to deploy it in."

Mr. Goulding reported a "step forward" in talks Monday with Goran Hadzic, another Serb leader from Croatia, but his failure to make progress with Mr. Babic was a clear setback.

Serbia and rival Croatia have agreed to the U.N. plan to send the "blue helmet" peacekeepers if a Jan. 3 ceasefire holds. Some of the peacekeepers would go to Krajina, a large strip of land south to Zagreb with an estimated 300,000 Serbs.

The ceasefire has held so far despite isolated violations. In the latest bloodshed, Croatian Radio said two Croatian soldiers were killed when the Yugoslav army launched an artillery attack on their positions near the Adriatic port of Zadar late Monday.

The radio said there had also been some machine-gun fire overnight near Dubrovnik and the eastern Croatian town of Vinkovci. The reports were not immediately confirmed by Serbian media.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in the fighting since Croatia declared independence last June. Serbs now control about one third of Croatian territory.

Mr. Babic, Krajina's president, objects to U.N. proposals to withdraw Yugoslav army troops from his region and replace them with a peacekeeping force. He is also worried that Serbs will be disarmed but Croats in nearby areas will keep their weapons.

"The basic objection is that it (the U.N. plan) treats Krajina as a part of Croatia which will be placed under U.N. protection," Mr. Babic said after meeting Mr. Goulding in Knin, 200 kilometres south of Zagreb.

"This is naturally unacceptable from our side and that is the basic cause of the armed conflict."

Mr. Goulding, who is checking conditions for deploying the peacekeepers on his five-day mission, said that other obstacles remained apart from Mr. Babic's rejection.

He said some problems lay on the Croatian side but gave no details, although he planned to take the matter up with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman later Tuesday.

Yeltsin reported in Black Sea port to meet navy commanders

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Yeltsin met with commanders of the disputed Black Sea Fleet Tuesday, appearing in the Russian port of Novorossiysk a day after inexplicably cancelling two days of appointments in Moscow, his office said.

Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman, Pavel Voshchanov, said the Russian president was aboard the cruiser Moskva with Commonwealth military Commander Yevgeny Shaposhnikov gathering information about the security of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Voshchanov said the visit was part of Mr. Yeltsin's preparations for an overseas trip later this week that is to include meetings with President George Bush, British Prime Minister John Major and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the TASS News Agency reported.

TASS earlier quoted the Mayor of Novorossiysk, Georgy Khobotov, as saying the visit to the Black Sea port was unrelated to the tug-of-war between Russia and Ukraine over control of the fleet.

Mr. Yeltsin, 60, abruptly cancelled his appointments in the capital Monday and Tuesday, including one with Japan's foreign minister. The cancellations fueled persistent rumours about his health and an alleged drinking problem.

TASS said Mr. Yeltsin arrived Monday night in Novorossiysk. Foreign Minister Andrei

Kozyrev said the overseas trip was still on.

He told delegates to Middle East peace talks that opened Tuesday in Moscow that "in the coming days, the world will hear a series of initiatives (from Mr. Yeltsin) that will prove that everyone will benefit from the new situation" in the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Voshchanov said Mr. Yeltsin offered to rescheduled his meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Mitio Watanabe for Wednesday, when he is also set to meet with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.

Mr. Yeltsin is the most popular and powerful politician in Russia, and reports of his ill health increase political instability in the newly independent country.

Since the failed Soviet coup in August, he has dropped from public sight several times, including three days in September when aides said he was suffering from a minor heart ailment and a 17-day stretch in October after weeks of relentless work.

On Jan. 18, after some strenuous travels inside Russia, Mr. Yeltsin was ordered by his doctors to rest at home for a day and cancel his meetings.

U.S. News and World Report earlier this month quoted unidentified sources as expressing new concern about rumours that Mr. Yeltsin was drinking heavily.

Meanwhile, thousands of new

recruits of the Black Sea Fleet have sworn allegiance to the new Commonwealth of Independent States despite Ukraine's efforts to take control of armed forces on its territory, a lawmaker said Monday.

The recruits were the first to pledge allegiance to the Commonwealth at the fleet's headquarters in Sevastopol, on Ukraine's Crimean peninsula.

The Interfax News Agency said 6,471 recruits who started training in October were invited to take the Commonwealth oath.

Of these, 5,306 agreed, 789 refused, 265 were undecided and 111 were ill or on vacation, according to Interfax and Alexander Kruglov, a member of the pro-Russian Republic Movement in the Crimea's legislature.

"This is the first step towards an undivided Commonwealth fleet bases in an independent Crimea," Mr. Kruglov said. Many ethnic Russians like Mr. Kruglov want the predominantly Russian Crimea to be independent of Ukraine.

The commander of the fleet, Adm. Igor Kasatonov, had earlier forbidden sailors to take an oath of loyalty to Ukraine.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and Ukraine have been engaged in a bitter battle for control of the fleet. The dispute and other issues involving the 3.7-million-strong former Soviet military has dominated the first



Boris Yeltsin

weeks of the Commonwealth.

With 45 cruisers, 28 submarines, 300 small and medium-sized ships, 150 airplanes and 85 helicopters, the fleet was considered part of the Soviet strategic forces and a direct counter to the U.S. 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean.

To date, no Black Sea Fleet sailors have taken the Ukrainian oath.

More than 70,000 soldiers have pledged allegiance to Ukraine, said lawmaker Mykola Porovsky, deputy chairman of the Coordinating Council of Ukraine's political reform movement Rukh.

Ukrainian Parliament Chairman Ivan Plynch said lawmakers would take action to stop their Russian counterparts from trying to dissuade the fleet's sailors not to pledge allegiance to Ukraine.

Socialists set harsh tone in Japanese parliament

TOKYO (R) — The head of Japan's main opposition party launched a blistering attack in parliament on Tuesday against Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's links to a bribery scandal.

"Prime Minister Miyazawa, there are even reports that Mr. Abe used this money to make you prime minister," charged Socialist Chairman Makoto Tanabe.

He was referring to bribes allegedly paid to former cabinet Minister Fumio Abe, a confidante of the prime minister.

"I would hate to even speak of the level of corruption Mr. Abe has fallen into. How long will the ruling party continue to repeat this cycle of scandals?" Mr. Tanabe added.

He was speaking on the first day of debate on a policy speech Mr. Miyazawa made last Friday at the start of a new 150-day parliamentary session.

Mr. Abe, treasurer for Mr. Miyazawa's faction in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was arrested earlier this month on suspicion of receiving bribes from a land developer.

Mr. Abe resigned as an LDP member but not from his seat in parliament.

"We demand that Mr. Abe take appropriate steps to resign from parliament," Mr. Tanabe said.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Tanabe said: "Mr. Miyazawa,

when you came to power, we were counting on you because we thought you were one of the truly liberal persons in the LDP.

"Now, your image has fallen to the ground and is soiled in the mud of scandals."

"I would like to sincerely apologise to the Japanese people for the conduct of my former colleague," Mr. Miyazawa responded.

"But I would like to refrain from commenting on the facts about the case. His resignation is basically his own problem."

The Abe affair is a second embarrassment for Mr. Miyazawa personally, after controversy resurfaced over his own role in the 1988-1989 recruit scandal.

At the time, Mr. Miyazawa acknowledged that his secretary had bought unlisted shares of the recruit conglomerate and made huge profits after they were listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Mr. Miyazawa resigned as finance minister in December 1988.

As soon as Mr. Miyazawa became prime minister last November, the opposition parties demanded that he submit legal documents on the recruit deal to set the record straight.

Mr. Miyazawa duly submitted the documents, only to be met by an opposition demand to summon his former secretary to testify in parliament.

Georgian troops seize Gamsakhurdia stronghold

POTI, Georgia (R) — Georgian government forces seized one of the last strongholds loyal to ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia Tuesday after a day of fighting in which at least six people were killed.

Government troops under the command of Jaba Ioseliani, head of one of the main forces making up the ruling Military Council, met no resistance as they moved into the Black Sea town of Poti.

Armoured vehicles rumbled along the tree-lined streets of Poti as residents, mainly supporters of Mr. Gamsakhurdia, boarded up windows and remained indoors.

"I'm very tired. It was a hard battle," said an exhausted Mr. Ioseliani, resting at his temporary headquarters set up in the town's yacht club.

The head of the town's hospital and local officials said six people were killed and at least 20 others injured in Monday's fighting around a bridge to the north of the town.

Mr. Gamsakhurdia, elected by a landslide last May, fled to Armenia three weeks ago after losing a bloody power struggle with the military council. He later returned to west Georgia, but his whereabouts have been unknown for the past week.

The fall of Poti was another major blow to his bid to regain power. Mr. Gamsakhurdia can now rely on support only in the port of Sukhumi to the north and the town of Zugdidi to the east.

"Poti was the most difficult part of our job, but the war is not finished yet. Zugdidi and Sukhumi are still in the hands of Gamsakhurdia," said Mr. Ioseliani.

TASS News Agency quoted Zugdidi Mayor Indiko Kobalia as saying Mr. Gamsakhurdia sup-

porters were staging round-the-clock demonstrations in the town. "The city will not surrender and is rejecting all proposals from the government troops to start negotiations," he said.

Mr. Ioseliani, carrying a Kalashnikov assault rifle and wearing a bandolier of machinegun bullets slung over his shoulder, predicted the fighting in Georgia would last "maybe two weeks or two months."

Many Poti residents vowed to resist the Military Council by continuing a campaign of strikes and protests.

"Our war is just beginning. There will be a lot of unrest and civil disobedience," she shouted an old woman inspecting empty shells scattered around the northern bridge leading into Poti.

"The Tbilisi soldiers are criminals and drug addicts," she said, waving an empty syringe she had found in the woods where government forces had encamped.

A psychologist from Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, travelling with troops said some men were taking drugs.

"I think there will be a lot of psychological problems when the war ends because Georgians are fighting Georgians," said Mr. Tornike Berishvili.

Mr. Ioseliani's troops occupied the town hall and immediately removed a portrait of Mr. Gamsakhurdia hanging above the main door.

An army truck carrying a rocket launcher was parked in front of the door, guarded by a dozen soldiers.

Hundreds of frightened town people waited around the building, uneasily mingling with the government soldiers.

80 killed in Karabakh fighting

MOSCOW (Agencies) — More than 60 Azerbaizani soldiers were killed by ethnic Armenians defending their village in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, TASS said.

The report also said at least 20 civilians died in the Sunday raid on Karin-Tak in the Susha district.

No casualty reports were given by official Azerbaizani sources. TASS said fighting continued Monday.

Azerbaijan and Armenia, two former Soviet republics, have fought for three years to control the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which lies in Azerbaijan but has a predominantly Armenian population.

Russian TV said that during the counterattacks, one fighter on Armenia's side who was killed carried a document identifying him as French.

French embassy officials in Moscow said they had no information about the man.

Militant whites arrested in S. African crackdown

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — Police arrested the country's most militant right-wing leader and nine of his colleagues Tuesday in a crackdown on the leading white extremist group.

The pre-dawn arrest of Eugene Terreblanche, head of the Neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement, is certain to outrage right-wingers, who already are threatening violence to prevent additional political reforms by President F.W. de Klerk.

"This is what one should expect in a police state," right-winger Piet Rudolph said of his arrest.

Robert Van Tonder, leader of another right-wing group, said Mr. De Klerk was "creating a climate of hate and bitterness" with the arrests.

But Mr. De Klerk said police were merely "applying the laws of the land without political bias."

The Afrikaner Resistance Movement is easily the largest of several extreme right groups and most analysts believe it could pose a serious threat to Mr. De Klerk's reforms if it chose to take up arms.

The 10 men, arrested on charges of public violence stemming from an incident last August, appeared briefly at the magistrate's court in Ventersdorp, west of Johannesburg. They were not asked to plead and were released on bail of 100 rand (\$36). They are to return to court on March 9.

Mr. Terreblanche has repeatedly said his group will resort to violence to prevent a black government from coming to power. Other right-wing groups have claimed responsibility for a number of bombings in recent months that have damaged public buildings but caused only a few injuries.

Many observers think the bombings are likely to increase if Mr. De Klerk pushes ahead with his promise to end apartheid and share power with the 30-million black majority.

Police Col. Johan Mostert told state-run television that the 10 men arrested constituted the leadership corps of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, known by its Afrikaans-language initials as the AWE.

The 10 were arrested in connection with a clash last Aug. 9 between police and thousands of AWE members protesting outside a hall where Mr. De Klerk was speaking. Three AWE members were killed.

Police Monday arrested the leader of South Africa's black radical Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse hundreds of protesters.

C and C Music Factory tops U.S. music awards

LOS ANGELES (R) — C and C Music Factory, which burst on the U.S. pop music scene last year with its unique blend for rock 'n' roll dance music, topped the list of winners at the 19th American Music Awards on Monday night.

The group was voted Best Band and Best New Artist in the rock 'n' roll category, as well as Best Artist and Best New Artist in the dance music category. It topped off the night with the best single, Gonna Make You Sweat, also in the dance category. Michael Bolton took the honours as Best Male Artist in the rock 'n' roll category, and won a second award for Best Album for Time, Love and Tenderness at the awards ceremony in Los Angeles.

Paula Abdul was voted the Best Female rock 'n' roll singer, while Garth Brooks garnered three awards in the country music section, for Best Male Artist, Single Record of the Year with The Thunder Rolls and Album of the Year with No Fences. Reba McEntire took the Best Female Artist Award. In the Soul/Rhythm and Blues category Luther-Andross was voted Best Male Artist and also took the award for Best Album in that category, with Power Of Love, while Mariah Carey took the Best Female Artist Award. Other winners included Guns N' Roses as the Best Heavy Metal Group, and Hammer as the Best Rap Artist.

Incense movie wins London award

LONDON (R) — British director Stephen Polakoff's Close My Eyes about an incestuous brother-and-sister relationship, won this year's Evening Standard British Film Award for best film Sunday. The controversial film stars Shakespearean actress Salka Reeves as a married woman having an illicit affair with her brother, played by Clive Owen.

Bonnie And Clyde kicks off American week in CIS

MOSCOW (AP) — The gangster film Bonnie And Clyde launched a week of American sitcoms, cartoons and films for millions of TV viewers across the former Soviet Union — but not before a long word from the sponsor. During the week, Warner Brothers International Television is providing three hours of programming a night on the main channel across Russia and the other former republics in an experiment that may lead to a more permanent venture. In addition to the Russian-dubbed version of the 1967 Bonnie And Clyde, other films to be broadcast include Superman, Being There and the 1981 version of The Postman Always Rings Twice. Also to be shown are an episode of the series Murphy Brown, Life Goes On and Perfect Strangers; the mini-series Napoleon And Josephine and several Bugs Bunny cartoons. But before Bonnie And Clyde began shooting its way across the screen, viewers saw a 15-minute commercial describing Time-Warner and its extensive media holdings. The commercial featured clips from recent films such as JFK and Robin Hood, Prince Of Thieves. A Russian announcer who introduced the commercial mispronounced the company's name — calling it Oran Brothers — even as she said it was presenting the programming without charge. The TV shows and films themselves will be uninterrupted by commercials, and will be shown in the Russian version of "prime time" — 7:15 p.m. to midnight. There will be a 30-minute break, however, for the popular children's show Good Night, Little Ones and the main nightly news programme, Novosti.

Menem models for magazine

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Argentine President Carlos Menem, 61, who has been called the world's most dapper head of state, modelled elegant sports clothes for the latest edition of the daily La Nacion's Sunday magazine. Mr. Menem posed wearing stylish Italian linen blazers and trousers at Punta Del Este, the Peronist leader, who travels with his personal hairdresser, plays soccer and tends to stay trim and admits he touches up his grey hair, leaving a streak of white on his trademark sideburns. But last year he had undergone cosmetic surgery, blaming his suddenly swollen features on a wasp sting.

Poll: Americans increasingly willing to turn to Democrat

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just 43 per cent of the American public approves of President George Bush's performance, and the public tends to think a Democrat would do a better job on many domestic issues, a New York Times/CBS News poll said.

The public has even lost confidence in Mr. Bush's handling of foreign policy, found the telephone survey of 1,281 adults nationwide.

The overall approval rating of 43 per cent is a 45 point drop since the president's popularity reached 88 per cent, a historic peak, after the Gulf war.

Forty-six per cent of those surveyed from Wednesday through Saturday approved of Mr. Bush's conduct of foreign policy, while 46 per cent disapproved.

Forty-six per cent said a Democratic president would be more likely to improve education, compared to 31 per cent who cited Mr. Bush.

Sixty-one per cent said a Democratic president would be more likely to make health care available to all, as against 19 per cent who said Mr. Bush would.

Forty-five per cent said a Democratic president would be most likely to end the recession. Thirty-two per cent said Mr. Bush would.

The poll had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

Meanwhile, President Bush told a convention of religious broadcasters Monday that opinion polls indicate "no society is more religious than the United States of America."

And "today the times are on the side of peace because the world, increasingly, is on the side of God," the president said.

"Seven in 10 Americans be-

lieve in life after death, eight in 10 that God works miracles, nine in 10 Americans pray," Mr. Bush said. "And more than 90 per cent believes in God, to which I say, thank God. I wish it were 100 per cent."

Addressing 1,375 people at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention, Mr. Bush praised the group for supporting U.S. forces in last year's Gulf war.

"Thank you for helping America, as Christ ordained, to be a light unto the world," in that conflict, he said.

As U.S. military forces fought "to defend all of what is best about America, we need you to help instill the traditional values that make life and liberty worth defending," Mr. Bush said.

He decried religious bigotry and racial prejudice, reaffirmed his opposition to abortion and outlined plans to boost spending to fight crime and narcotics.

Mr. Bush noted that the Rev. Billy Graham, who was on the dais, drew ridicule once when he came back from a trip to the former Soviet Union and reported that faith in God was very much alive there.

"Today we see that he clearly was right," said Mr. Bush.

Mr. Bush has addressed the broadcasters five times as president or vice president.

President Bush will use his State of the Union address for an election-year appeal to Congress to wage the economic equivalent of the Gulf war.

Mr. Bush is expected to challenge the House and the Senate to approve by early March his programme to fight the recession, congressional and administration sources said.

The 9 p.m. EST (0200 GMT Wednesday) speech comes with

Mr. Bush's approval ratings at the lowest point of his presidency.

"It will have a great deal of meat in it," presidential spokesman Martin Fitzwater said. One Bush campaign memo calls the speech the "defining event of his presidency."

But Democrats — and Republican challenger Pat Buchanan — already are attacking the president's expected "growth package" for not going far enough.

Mr. Bush is proposing a blend of tax breaks and spending programmes to prod the economy and help the economically disadvantaged. The proposals range from tax credits for new home buyers and larger exemptions for families to more money for health and food programmes for poor children.

More about White House plans for rescuing the economy will come with the release of the president's proposed \$1.5 trillion budget for fiscal 1993. The budget was scheduled for release Wednesday, but the Office of Management and Budget said Monday it would be delayed because of "printing problems."

Mr. Bush has said he'll exert the same leadership in overseeing the economic rescue plan that he used in forging the coalition during the Gulf war.

The president was expected to reflect on the Gulf victory as well as on the breakup of the Soviet Bloc and the easing of East-West tensions. Officials said the speech will present a dual assessment of the State of the Union.

While Mr. Bush will seek to be solemn and realistic on the economy, he will be upbeat on the nation's international standing, the officials said.

In a separate development,

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton and an Arkansas woman Monday accused each other of lying in a renewed dispute over her assertion that they had a 12-year affair.

Mr. Clinton's campaign organisation sought to discredit Gennifer Flowers with a notarised statement from a Little Rock agent who for four years booked her as a singer and said she never mentioned Mr. Clinton to him.

At a New York news conference sponsored by the tabloid Star, which paid her for her story, Ms. Flowers said Mr. Clinton is "absolutely lying" in denying the affair. Mr. Clinton shot back emphatically: "She didn't tell the truth."

His wife, Hillary, said at a campaign appearance Monday in South Dakota, "we've explained ourselves as best we can. We leave it at that."

Ms. Flowers' allegations are unsubstantiated, and a tape recording played at the Star news conference, said to be of telephone conversations between Ms. Flowers and Mr. Clinton, did not establish that there had been an affair.

Whatever the truth, Ms. Flowers' appearance marked an escalation in the campaign controversy that has thrust Mr. Clinton into an unwanted spotlight at precisely the time his candidacy appeared to be taking flight.

Her news conference marked a continuation of the debate over the role of the media and when questions of marital fidelity should play in a campaign.

"Enough is enough," Democratic National Committee Chairman Ronald H. Brown said in a statement. "We should pull the plug on trash journalism and titillation

television."

A poll conducted by ABC-TV news Monday showed that 73 per cent of respondents said they agreed with Mr. Clinton that the question of whether he had an extramarital affair was between him and his wife.

Sixty-six per cent of the 790 adults surveyed said they could vote for a presidential candidate who had had an extramarital affair. Eighty per cent said the allegations should not be an issue in the campaign.

The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points.

At the news conference, Ms. Flowers said the Arkansas governor told her "he loved me" and played a taped conversation she said was of Mr. Clinton, talking to her in the fall of 1991 about the likelihood reporters would ask about their relationship.

The voice urges a denial, then says, "they can't run a story like this unless somebody said, 'yeah, I did it with him.'"

The authenticity of the tapes has not been independently verified.

Ms. Flowers, whose story appears in the current issue of the Star, began her news conference by stating: "Yes, I was Bill Clinton's lover for 12 years."

She said she had had about the relationship for the past two years "to protect him.... The truth is I loved him. Now he tells me to deny it. Well, I'm sick of all the denials and I'm sick of all the lies."